

Companions on the Journey: **Sisters and Associates**



"Pilgrim's Way"
Artwork by Associate Karen Kietzman

THE ASSOCIATE MANUAL

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Introduction

The Associate Manual has been designed to be a guide and resource for you , whether you are a Candidate on your journey toward becoming an Associate or whether you are an Associate or Companion seeking deeper understanding of the Associate Relationship as rooted in Franciscan charism.

In **Chapters 1 and 2** you will have the opportunity to learn more about the Sisters: present and past history. **Chapter 3** includes reviews of some of the many books written about Francis and Clare as well as timelines of their lives. As a supplement to some of the information you may have already received, **Chapters 4 and 5** provide a broader perspective on our Associate relationship. **Chapters 6 and 7** are meant to open more widely for you the richness of Franciscan/Clarean practice and spirituality. These two chapters lend themselves to discussion and prayerful reflection not only with your Companion but also with other Associates in our regional groups. The Manual concludes with various resources in **Chapter 8**.

Each Chapter includes discussion questions for prayerful discernment and reflection. If you are a Candidate, you and your Companion will use these chapters to initiate further inquiry about yourself and the Congregation. If you already are an Associate, you will find the Manual an ongoing reference for spiritual reflection. It is designed to help you discover how relevant its topics are in the spirituality of your daily life. It encourages sharing stories and hopes with each other as we live the Gospel way of life.

The sequence of the Chapters is also worthy of note. It corresponds with the sequence of the discernment process which was developed after much conversation and study by a task force of Associates and Sisters commissioned by the Governing Board of the Congregation to review in depth the Associate Relationship. Since each of you comes with a different experience and history of the Congregation, you may want to adjust the sequence and the amount of time you spend on the various Chapters. Be open to the Holy Spirit as you proceed on this journey. The Manual is set up so that parts can be added or deleted to keep it a "living" document and guide.

So let us begin! Come with your hopes and dreams, insights and questions, passions and compassion. Be blessed in your desire to walk with the Joliet Franciscan Sisters and Associates in the Gospel way of life of Francis and Clare.

Chapter 1: Mission Statement and Corporate Stances of the Congregation

MISSION STATEMENT

Led by the
Spirit,
we, the Joliet Franciscans,
embrace the Gospel life
by commitment to
Franciscan values
and respond to the needs
of our time through
prayer, community
and ministry.



Artwork by Sr. Kay Francis Berger, OSF

Reflecting on the Mission Statement of the Congregation



As Associates, we read and meditate on the Mission Statement of the Joliet Franciscans, to see if and how it may guide us as lay Christians. We each have been drawn to these Sisters under different circumstances and for different reasons. We have been “led by the Spirit” from within our own life situations to embrace the Gospel life in partnership with the Joliet Franciscans.

Gospel Life

Francis experienced his call to rebuild the Church literally. Always taking God at God’s word, Francis simply began to repair and eventually redesign the church of San Damiano, brick by brick. But, being led by the Spirit, he was seduced into *living* the Gospel. He did so by radically applying the Gospel to his daily life, and by examining his life and looking for guidance from the Gospels. We call this “*going from Gospel to life and from life to Gospel*”.

How have I been called to embrace the Gospel life?

Which Gospel passages have inspired me? Which have challenged me?

Franciscan Values

Out of this experience of Gospel living, Franciscans, over the last 800 years, have identified what might be called their “**Franciscan core values**,” their special gifts in the life of the Church, their charism. And so, in their mission statement, the Sisters pledge to “embrace the Gospel life by commitment to Franciscan values...” Following is a brief explanation of these core values. As you meditate and pray over them, the questions that follow may help you discern their place in your own life.

Conversion

For Franciscans, conversion of heart is an ongoing process. When Francis urges us to begin a life of penance, he means we must totally and continuously undergo conversion. We make a dwelling place for God within, so that our love can grow by continuously *turning toward God and neighbor*. This is a daily challenge and often we fail. Conversion of heart is the root value and from it flows the other three: poverty, humility or honesty about who I am, and contemplation. (adapted TOR rule 6,8 and Jn 14:23) At the end of his life, Francis confessed that he had only just begun.

Do I really believe that God is not finished with me yet?

How do I deal with the changes that are necessary to grow in faith and love?

How do I accept these changes? With trust? With joy?

How open am I to the new creation that God is always holding before me?

Poverty

Trusting the Father, Christ chose for himself and his mother a poor and humble life, even though he valued created things attentively and lovingly. For Francis, this meant more than “having nothing”. It meant “having nothing but God”. From this experience an amazing freedom emerged. Poverty allows us to live peacefully in our total dependence on God. We begin to understand that all we have comes from God and that we are stewards of these gifts and of all of creation.

What does detachment from temporal goods mean for me?

What opportunities do I have to be God’s steward of creation in the use of water, land, energy, animals, and plants?

As a resident of the wealthiest country in the world, how much am I willing to go without so that the cry of the poor may be heard and answered?

Humility (Minority)

In the time of Francis and Clare, the middle class was only beginning to emerge from the feudal system. Most of the people were the “little ones,” in Italian, *minores*, the ordinary workers, the poor and the destitute. The wealthy and powerful were the *majores*. If Francis was to walk in the footsteps of Christ, he and his followers had to be *minores*.

As is described in the Rule for lay people (SFO 11,13 adapted): In the spirit of the Beatitudes, and as pilgrims and strangers on our way to the Father, let us purify our hearts from every tendency and yearning for *possession and power*. As the Father sees in every person the features of his Son, so let us, with a gentle and courteous spirit, accept all people as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ. A sense of community makes us joyful and ready to place ourselves on an *equal basis* with all people, especially with the *lowly* from whom we strive to create conditions of life worthy of people redeemed by Christ.

How important is keeping control for me?

In my day to day life, how do I practice “namaste?” Does the God in me greet the God in my child, spouse, co-worker, friend, neighbor?

What would it mean for me to place myself on an equal basis with my immediate community and with our brothers and sisters throughout the world who are in dire need?

Prayer and Contemplation

Francis experienced and taught simple forms of prayer. Some of the brothers could not read and books were rare and expensive. But for those in love with the Incarnate Christ, prayer was a song of praise and thanksgiving. “Let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all we *are and do.*”

Let us participate in the sacramental life of the Church, above all the Eucharist. Let us join in liturgical prayer, reliving the mysteries of the life of Christ in our own lives.” (SFO rule 8, adapted)

Since it is only through prayer and contemplation that we can be open to conversion, poverty and humility, spend some time sharing your own experience or the place of prayer in your life.

When and where do you pray?

*How does your personal prayer nourish your communal, sacramental and liturgical prayer? And **vice versa**?*

From what you know about St. Francis and St. Clare, what are some aspects of Franciscan prayer that speak to you and inspire you?

The Needs of Our Times

Francis and Clare lived in a time of cultural upheaval, wars, injustice, and chaos that impacted not only the civil state but also the Church. The foundress of the Joliet Franciscan Sisters, Mother Alfred Moes, was led by the Spirit into a similar era of history. Each Sister responded to the signs of the times. That’s what holy people do—people who are wholly human and can recognize the signs of the times! As you grow in the Associate Relationship with other Associates and Sisters, you will learn more of the history of their various ministries and how they are nourished by prayer and community to meet the needs of the world.

What do you consider your ministry or ministries?

How do you sustain the strength to continue it? How has it changed over time?

How can association with the Sisters nourish your response to the needs of the times?

In the light of your discernment and discussion about the Associate Relationship, what aspects of this mission statement mean most to you at this point?

How much are you drawn to join with these Sisters in their mission? (Later you can compare it to your commitment statement as an Associate.)

Corporate Stances and Action

We commit ourselves to
prayer, study, dialogue and action
for nuclear disarmament. 1996



Action: Personally become more informed through
internet and current world news.

www.nti.org

www.psr.org/nuclear-weapons/
www.un.org/disarmament/education



As Joliet Franciscans,
we commit to cultivating a reverent,
interdependent relationship with Earth
and all its peoples. 2004

Action: Be aware of migrant workers and work
place justice issues and support needed reforms.

- Use glass containers for storage of foods
- Decrease use of paper, plastic and styrofoam
(1369 TONS of styrofoam buried each year in landfills)

We, the Sisters and Associates of the
Joliet Franciscans,
denounce the practice of human trafficking
and commit ourselves to the work
of bringing about the elimination
of this evil practice. 2006

- Action: Check into a hotel's policy on human
trafficking before making reservations.
- Borrow from JFC one of the following DVD's to
view:

Not My Life/ Lives For Sale/Look Beneath the Surface



Reflecting on the Corporate Stances of the Congregation

Over the years, in responding to the needs of the time, the Sisters have professed corporate stances on specific social justice issues. These have been identified through a process of common study, prayer, discussion and action. The Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) commission of Sisters and Associates meets regularly and offers workshops, classes, events and educational materials to keep these corporate stances relevant for the Congregation. There are also resources on these issues that you can borrow from the Congregation for your own use or to share with others.

On the Congregation's website, jolietfranciscans.org, under *History*, the Sisters list their corporate stances updating them with relevant examples for prayer and action.

Which corporate stance relates most to your sense of justice and why?

How have you supported it through action and prayer? What more can you do?

Which one would you like to learn more about?



Chapter 2: Our Congregation Roots

HISTORY OF THE CONGREGATION

The following pages contain a collection of pictures describing the history of the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate. This collection was created to celebrate the “145th Year Anniversary: “145 Year Anniversary: Serving God, Serving Community” in 2011 and hung in the Joliet Library. It has been updated to reflect the changes up to and including the 150th Anniversary in 2015.



Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate

Imagine leaving behind your family and your home to answer a calling. Armed with a knowledge of math and music, art and architecture, and the ability to speak English, French, German and their native Luxembourg language, Maria Catherine Moes, who would go on to become Mother Alfred Moes, and her sister Catherine, the eventual Sister Barbara, took a leap of faith in 1853 and traveled to the United States to begin a new life of service to God and community.



Mother Alfred and Sister Barbara's House in Luxembourg
(third house on the left)



Sister Barbara Moes, OSF



Mother Alfred Moes, OSF
First General Superior of the Congregation



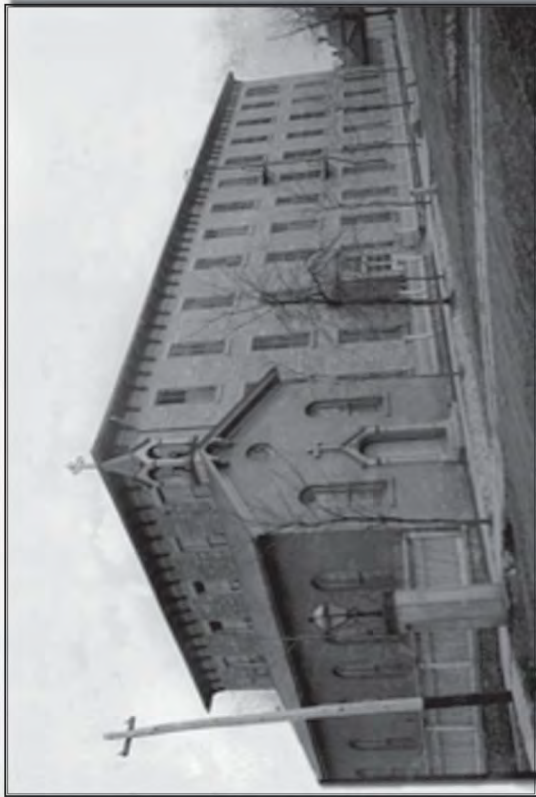
Traveling first to Wisconsin and spending time in Milwaukee before going to Indiana where they lived with two other Congregations, the Moes sisters, along with two companion sisters, were accepted into the Franciscan Third Order Regular in 1863. Within months, this small group of Sisters had begun teaching at St. John the Baptist School in Joliet. In 1865, Mother Alfred traveled to Allegany, New York to meet with Father Pamfilo da Magliano, where on August 2nd he named her as the first General Superior of this new congregation, the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate.

Beginning of the Congregation

*A*s the congregation grew during her years as General Superior, Mother Alfred answered the call to send Sisters wherever the need arose. She opened St. Francis Academy in Joliet. She provided aid to the victims of the Chicago Fire in 1871 and traveled to Tennessee during the yellow fever epidemic to help the Sisters there, but arrived too late as some had already died.



A young Bishop Thomas Foley,
Bishop of Chicago around 1870



St. Francis Convent and Academy in 1871 located on the corner of Broadway and Division Street in Joliet. Sold to the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart, it was eventually demolished in 1964.

*W*hen Bishop Foley of Joliet demanded that she be replaced as General Superior, she was commissioned by Mother Alberta, the new superior, to build a new academy in Rochester, Minnesota at the request of their local bishop. After the opening of the Academy of Our Lady of Lourdes, Bishop Foley of Joliet ordered Mother Alfred's separation from the Joliet Franciscans. Twenty-five Sisters went with Mother Alfred to begin a new Congregation in Rochester while ninety-nine remained in Joliet.

A New Beginning

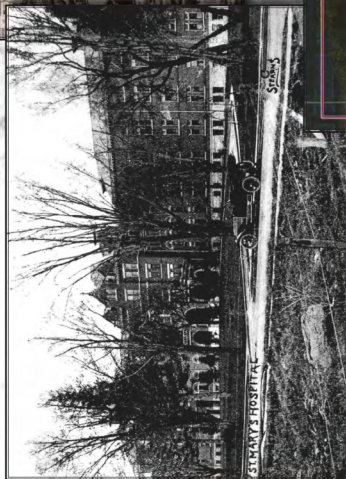
Mother Alfred's schools in Rochester flourished. When an 1883 tornado devastated the area, the schools were opened to the victims. Mother Alfred immediately recognized the need for a hospital. Dr. William Mayo was asked to plan and staff a hospital at the Sisters' expense. St. Mary's Hospital opened in 1889 and today is part of the Mayo Clinic.



Gravestone of Mother Alfred Moes.



Prayer card given at Mother Alfred's funeral.



St. Mary's Hospital opens in 1889



Ruins left by the Tornado in 1883



Statues of Mother Alfred and Dr. William Mayo at the entrance of the Clinic.

Mother Alfred returned to Joliet for a visit in 1898 — the only visit since her separation from the Joliet Franciscans. She died on December 18, 1899, having lived a life of service to God and to community. Mother Alfred Moes and her sister, Sister Barbara, who died on November 23, 1895 are buried side by side in Rochester, Minnesota.

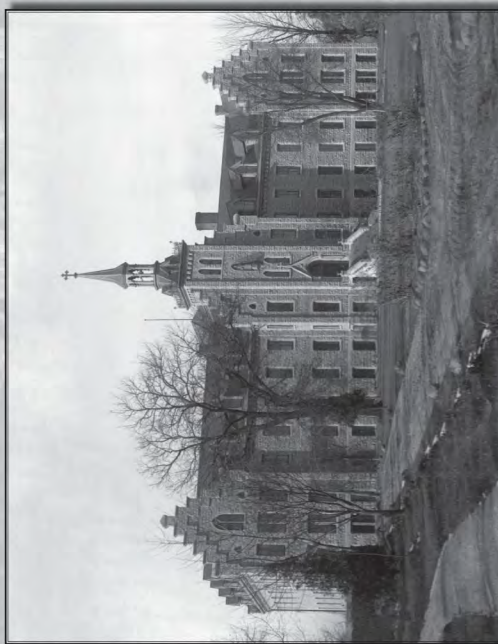
The Motherhouse : 520 Plainfield Road

It was the late 1870s, and the Joliet Franciscans needed more space to accommodate the growing Congregation and the St. Francis Academy students. Mr. William Strong offered to sell a piece of land on Plank Road (bordered by Taylor, Douglas and Wilcox Streets) to the Sisters for \$3,425 if they would guarantee the building of an educational institution on the property. With the necessary approval obtained, the Sisters became the owner of the property in November, 1879.

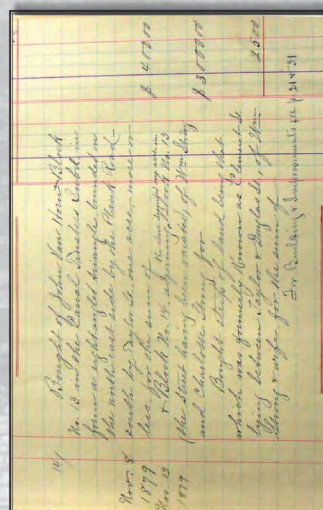
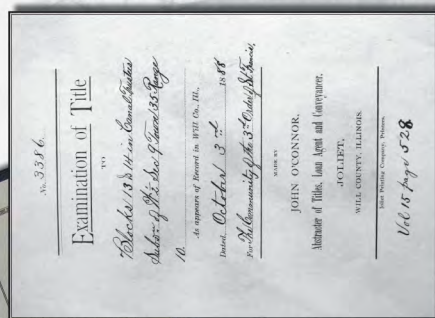
The groundbreaking took place on October 4, 1880. The cornerstone was laid on May 15, 1881, and work progressed steadily. By the second week of August, 1882, Mother Celestine Sontag led the Congregation into the new Motherhouse. The Sisters left their former Motherhouse to the Sisters of St. Francis of the Sacred Heart where it would eventually become St. Joseph's Hospital.

As the needs of the Congregation changed over the years, expansions and improvements to the original structure continued.

The official opening Mass was celebrated on August 15, 1882, the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.



The examination of the Title for the property was done by the Will County Title Company on October 3, 1888.



Above: The Congregation's Annals record the purchase of the property on November 8, 1879 for a total of \$3,425.00



Above: Major renovations are completed in 1898-99 in St. Joseph Chapel.



Right: New flooring was placed in 1931. By 1948, major renovations were completed on the altars, ceiling and lighting.

Transformation of the Chapel

With fewer Sisters and with older members of the Congregation now living at Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home, the Joliet Franciscans first sold the Taylor Wing and then the remainder of the building to the University of St. Francis in 2004.

The Sisters have fond memories of their Motherhouse, especially St. Joseph Chapel, which is still used for many Congregation celebrations.

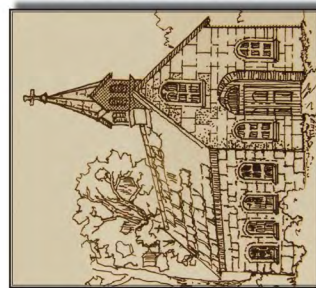


St. Joseph Chapel as it appears today. Sisters gather for the Installation of the 2008-2012 Central Administration.

Sisters Begin First Ministry in Joliet

A Church Struck by Lightning
---Five Persons Killed.
 During the severe thunder storm on last Sunday, about half past eleven o'clock, the German Catholic Church located in the north part of the city, was struck by lightning. The electricity first struck the top of the steeple and passing down separating the timbers in various directions, and the were progressing at the time, and the church was filled to its utmost capacity with worshippers.

News article from the 1864 Joliet Signal Newspaper, which tells about the lightning hitting the church steeple and starting the fire that killed five parishioners.

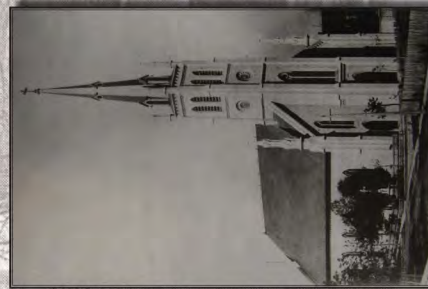


Sketch of St. John's circa 1852, which was hit by the lightning bolt.

The Sisters did not choose Joliet. Joliet chose them. In 1863, they received a request from Father Carl Kuemin, pastor of St. John the Baptist to teach in the school he had just opened. St. John's was founded in 1852 – the same year the city of Joliet was incorporated - to serve the needs of German speaking Catholics. Being fluent in German and English, Mother Alfred taught her students in both languages.

By 1865, the Sisters were teaching at St. John the Baptist in Joliet and St. Mary/St. Patrick in Kickapoo, Illinois. The congregation was growing as were the requests for teachers at more schools, not only in Joliet and Chicago, but in communities elsewhere in Illinois and other states. At the end of Mother Alfred's term as General Superior in 1876, the Sisters were teaching in twenty-three locations in Illinois, Ohio, Missouri, Tennessee and Wisconsin.

In the years from 1880 – 1890, the United States population saw enormous growth with the addition of two and one-half million immigrants. People from Poland, Germany, Italy, Slovenia, Slovakia and Bohemia were among the many who were making their way to what they hoped would be a better life in this country of ours, little more than a hundred years old at the time.



In 1866 the new St. John Parish was completed up to the tower, and on August 15, the cornerstone was laid.

The Franciscan Friars came to St. John's in the Spring of 1877.



St. John the Baptist School in Joliet was the first ministry of the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate. Mother Alfred and Sister Bernarda began teaching here on November 4, 1863.

This picture is of the second St. John School, built in 1885 at a cost of \$16,000. It was later torn down and a third school was built to accommodate the increase in enrollment.

Responding to Immigrant Growth

The growth of the country brought new challenges. Many of the immigrants were Catholic, a faith they lived deeply – a faith in which they wanted their children to be educated. Teachers who spoke languages other than English were needed in many schools where English was spoken little, if at all. Sisters were sent to St. Wenceslaus, the first Czech school in Chicago, and St. Procopius, also a Czech school. Working side by side with a pastor or lay teacher who spoke the Czech language, the Sisters provided the education the children needed.

As the Czech immigrant population continued to grow in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, so did the number of Czech schools. And the Joliet Franciscans were with them every step of the way. This fact was not lost on the Archbishop of Chicago, Patrick Feehan, who said on one occasion that “many...Bohemian children” would have been lost if not for the Joliet Franciscan Sisters.



Sr. Vita Zeman ministered at Czech schools and authored a series of four readers (above) that were published in 1931 and were used where the Sisters taught.



Sr. John Rooney was the first Irish-born Principal. She was also one of the original Sisters in Memphis during the Yellow Fever Epidemic.



Beloved by many in Joliet, Sr. Ferdinand Stalzer spent 40 years at St. Joseph School. When she died in January, 1936, it was written that “crowds and crowds of people came to view her and to pray for her at her funeral.”

The Sisters began the “first Slovak parochial school in the Western Hemisphere” at St. Stephen’s in Streator, Illinois. The Irish-born principal, Sister John Rooney along with another teacher opened the school in 1889 for fifteen pupils. Working with the pastor, Father Erwin Gellhof and a lay member of the parish, teachers and pupils overcame the language barrier.

In Joliet, St. Joseph’s was a Slovenian parish and school. Sister Ferdinand Stalzer would be taught the Slovenian language by the pastor and she would go on to lead the school as its principal for 35 years. So important was Sr. Ferdinand to the school that when she was to be transferred to Bayfield, Wisconsin to work with the Native American students, St. Joseph’s pastor asked that she remain in Joliet. His request was granted and Sister Ferdinand remained at St. Joseph’s until poor health intervened. Stalzer Hall at St. Joseph’s commemorates her devoted service to the parish.

Sisters Continue to Influence



Sister Chrysantha was a member of the faculty and administration of the College of St. Francis for 37 years.

In 1963, Sister M. Chrysantha Hoeft wrote of the Sisters' contributions to the education of the immigrant population by adapting a statement from the Congregation's Annals. She quotes the Annals: "There never had been a national spirit in the early years, nor is there now. The Sisters were and are, not German, not Irish, not Czech, Slovenian, French or Slovak; they were and are simply the children of our common Father, the dear St. Francis, helping one another and those entrusted to their care to become loyal American citizens without losing their own national identity, to become brothers and sisters under the Fatherhood of God. This has ever been our goal."

The Joliet Catholic schools were greatly influenced by the Joliet Franciscan Sisters throughout their long history. Every parish in Joliet has been impacted by their presence. The Sisters have ministered in thirty states, as well as other countries, particularly Brazil.

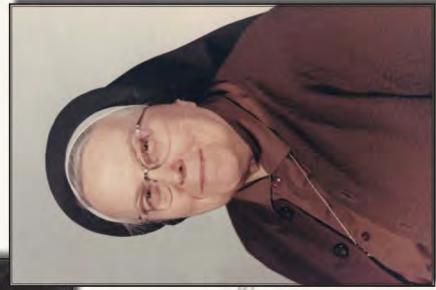
Today, Joliet Franciscans are still teaching in all levels of education from preschool to higher education in many areas of the United States, as well as Brazil. They serve as administrators, teachers, campus ministers, tutors and librarians. They continue to teach English as a second language (ESL) and assist in preparing individuals for their High School Equivalency Diploma (GED).

The Joliet Franciscans continue to serve and educate the student in each of us.

Mother Angela Rosenberger was the first novice of the Congregation. Her phonics charts and booklets were copyrighted as early as 1910 and are still extolled today.



Sr. Alcantara Held's Civic Course, published in 1923, was used in each grade wherever our Sisters taught.



Sr. Edna Hans spent six decades in education beginning in 1917. "Sister Edna's seat work" became part of the vocabulary of elementary school teachers describing her spiraled books of daily worksheets for their children.

Sisters Begin Teaching Outside of Illinois



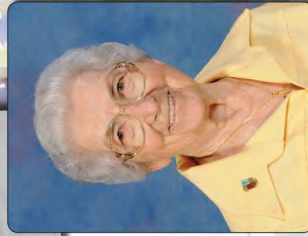
Sister Paula Bingert (left), a native of Mansfield, Ohio, is a life-long member of St. Peter's Parish. She is pictured here with Sister Bernard Marie Campbell, who has given 57 years of service to St. Peter's.

Ohio became the first state outside of Illinois where the Sisters began a teaching ministry. Sent by Mother Alfred, the Sisters arrived at St. Peter in Mansfield in 1871. At the time, the parish was only ten years old when the Joliet Franciscans became a part of its history. In 2011, the Sisters celebrated 140 years of continuous service. 401 Sisters served at St. Peter's for a total of 1,857 years and still counting! Sister Bernard Marie Campbell and Sister Paula Bingert continue to serve the parish today.

In 1961, the Sisters helped establish Cardinal Gibbons High School located in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Sister Marie Schramko became the girls' principal when the school first opened. She still serves as an assistant principal today. Sister Janet Reiden, who arrived in 1963, also currently serves as a member of the Cardinal Gibbons' High School faculty.



Sister Marie Schramko, OSF



Sister Janet Reiden, OSF

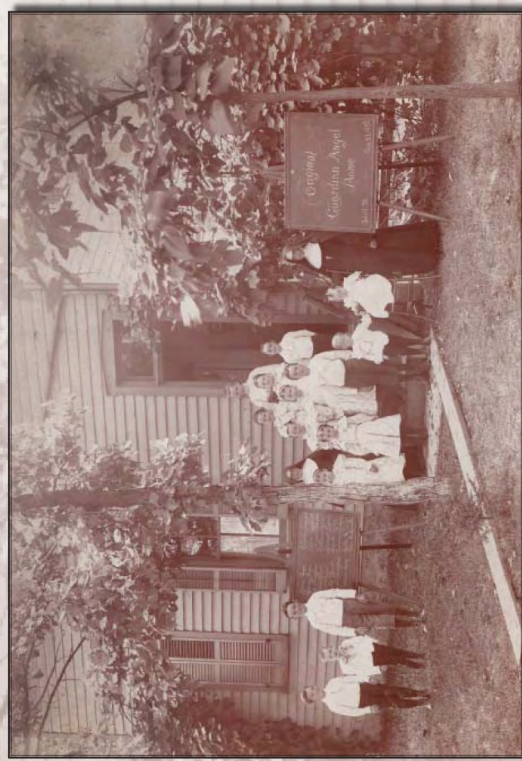


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The Joliet Franciscans continue to serve and educate the student in each of us.

Watercolor by Catherine Newack
St. Peter Church - Mansfield, OH

Beginnings of Guardian Angel Home



The original Guardian Angel Home was located on the grounds of the Motherhouse, 550 Plainfield Road in 1897.

The care of children has always been at the core of the Sisters' work. So, when John Hartmann - who had lost his wife in the 1864 fire at St. John the Baptist Church - asked the Sisters to care for his children, they said, "Yes" without hesitation. This simple act of compassion and caring was the beginning of the Congregation's commitment to the care of orphaned children.

Over the years, the Hartmann children would be joined by others, always living in the Motherhouse with the Sisters. In 1897, a cottage behind the Motherhouse became the first Guardian Angel Home.



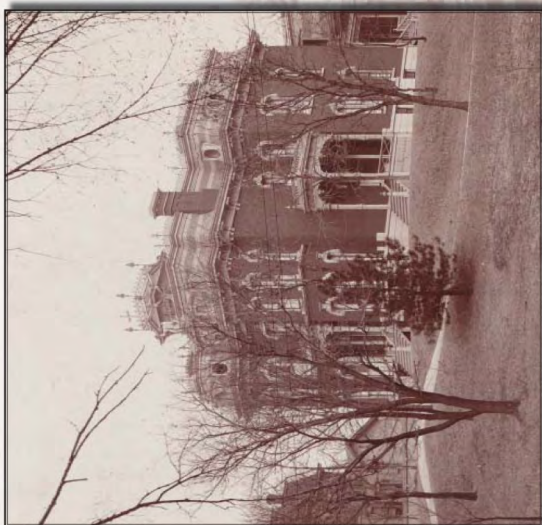
One of the Hartman children who was orphaned in 1864, Sister Cecilia Hartman joined the Congregation in 1873. She died on June 16, 1921 at the age of 64.



In 1897, Leander Thompson, age 1 year and 5 months, was the first baby admitted into the Orphanage on the Motherhouse grounds.

Expansion of Guardian Angel Home

As the number of children grew, the need for space grew as well. The next year, the Fox Estate on Buell was purchased and within a year fifty children were in residence. The need for additional space continued until in 1925, ground was broken and the cornerstone laid for the building that still stands today on Theodore and Plainfield. His Eminence, George Cardinal Mundelein of Chicago dedicated the building on May 16, 1926.



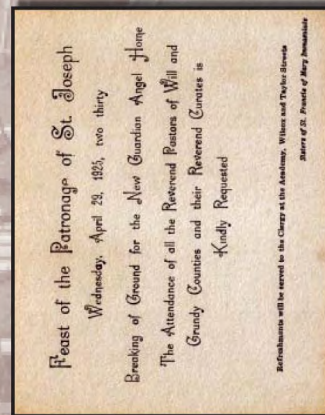
The Fox Mansion was purchased in 1898.



Almost finished, Guardian Angel Home still stands today on Theodore and Plainfield Road in Joliet.



Dedication Ceremony took place on May 16, 1926. Cardinal Mundelein blesses the new building.



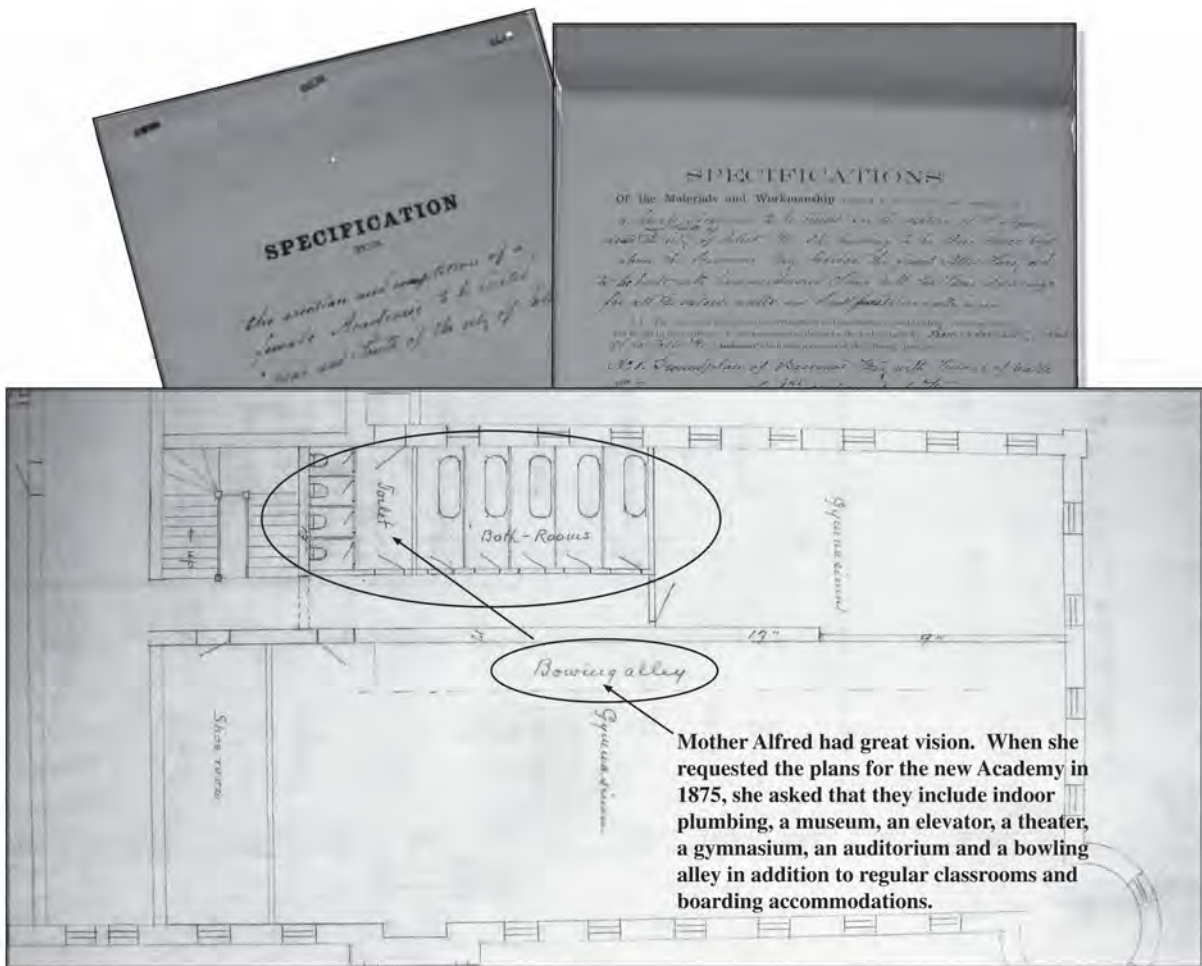
Invitation to the Ground-breaking Ceremony.

St. Francis Academy

In 1869, Mother Alfred Moes realized one of her dreams to begin an academy for both boarding and day students. St. Francis Academy became a reality and was located with the Motherhouse. As both the congregation of Sisters and the student body grew, they needed to provide more space. Mother Alfred purchased land and additions were built in 1869, 1870 and 1871 using money raised at the eleven mission houses in existence at the time, as well as the inheritance received by Mother Alfred and her sister, Sister Barbara Moes.

In 1874, Mother Alfred acquired the Oak Hill Nursery, where Nowell Park stands today. Her hope was to have a building separate from the Motherhouse for St. Francis Academy. Plans were drawn up for an E-shaped four-story stone building complete with elevator, gymnasium and a museum. In 1876, bids were taken from contractors and work was ready to begin. The landscaping was already completed.

Deciding that a change in leadership was needed, Bishop Thomas Foley called for an election of a new general superior for the Congregation. As a result, the Sisters shelved plans for the new academy.



Evolution of St. Francis Academy

In 1880, Mother Francis Shanahan purchased 13+ acres on Plank Road (the predecessor of today's Plainfield Road). The groundbreaking took place on October 4, 1880 and the cornerstone laying on May 15, 1881. In September 1882, classes began. The Taylor Wing and Tower Hall became home to St. Francis Academy in 1915 and 1923 respectively.



St. Francis Academy remained on the grounds of the Motherhouse until 1956 when the Sisters built a new academy on Larkin and Ingalls in Joliet. In 1990, St. Francis Academy and Joliet Catholic High School merged to become a co-educational Catholic high school, Joliet Catholic Academy.

Joliet Catholic Academy is a co-sponsored institution of the Joliet Franciscans and the Carmelites.



Top photo: Small Chapel was used as the first St. Francis Academy from 1869-1871. The building next to the chapel was built to accommodate the growing student population. This building was used from 1871-1882.

Academy students' classes were held in the Motherhouse on Plainfield Road from 1882-1904. However, more space was again needed. The addition of the "Taylor Street Wing" to the Motherhouse was used as the Academy from 1915-1923.



Continued growth meant more space was needed. Thus, the Sisters built "Tower Hall," the new St. Francis Academy. This was used from 1923-1956.

Property on Larkin & Ingalls (GAH farmland owned by the Sisters) became the site of St. Francis Academy (1956-1990) and eventually, Joliet Catholic Academy (1990 - present) was established.





College of St. Francis

Education of children was the predominant ministry of the Sisters. By 1920, they were teaching in almost 40 elementary schools and three high schools in four states. So it is no surprise that ensuring the continued education of their Sisters, who were teachers, became very important. So important, in fact, that the Congregation began a college for just that purpose.

- 1920: A college predominantly for the education of the Sisters begins.
- 1925: Assisi Junior College opens offering college courses to the public.
- 1930: The school began to operate as the College of St. Francis, a four-year liberal arts college. The first graduation class numbered nineteen.
- 1962: The College of St. Francis is incorporated.
- 1971: The College of St. Francis becomes a co-educational institution.
- 1998: The College of St. Francis becomes the University of St. Francis.



From 1926 - 1938, Mother Thomasine Fryewska was the first President of the College.

The College was originally located in the Taylor Wing of the Motherhouse, but building continued in order to accommodate the growing student population. From 1930 through the early 1990s, additions were made to Tower Hall and several new buildings were constructed.

Evolution of The University of St. Francis



ASSISI JUNIOR COLLEGE, Joliet, Illinois



Top Left: Assisi Junior College.

Top right: Expansion at the College of St. Francis.



Bottom: Aerial view of the University of St. Francis.

The University of St. Francis is a sponsored institution of the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate.

Brazil: A Service of Presence

In the early 1960s, Pope John XXIII asked congregations of women religious throughout North America to send 10% of their memberships(*) to Latin America. Latin America was predominantly Catholic, although there were not enough priests and Sisters. Mother Borromeo Mack, General Superior of the Joliet Franciscans at the time, said “yes.” She originally considered Peru as the country in which the Sisters would begin their Latin American ministry, but accepted the invitation to Brazil.



First Novitiate Class in Brazil (1967-1968)



Pictured with Mother Borromeo (center) are Sisters Norma Clare (Ruth Ann) Berry, Miriam David (Susan) Balme, Gretchen (Grace) Straub and Lawrence (Mary Ann) Glascott.

And so it began. On December 18, 1963, four North American Sisters arrived in Santa Helena de Goiás, covered in red dust from a day-long journey, mostly on dirt roads. They were unable to speak but a few words of Brazil's native language, Portuguese. Santa Helena is where the first mission school was established. Today in Santa Helena, there is a pre-school, elementary school, high school, a home for seniors, a community center and a children's home. These pioneering Sisters charted their course as teachers, catechists, and ministered in the ways presented to them by the people they were sent to serve.

(*) At the time of Pope John XXIII's request, the Joliet Franciscans had 800 members. Had Mother Borromeo fully honored His Holiness' request, 80 Sisters would have been sent to Latin America.

Assessing the Needs

The Archdiocese of Goiânia provided thirty-six acres of land, which was where the Center House and Novitiate were built. The Sisters visited every family in the area to learn what the needs of the community were. By far, the greatest need was a school. So, in February, 1970, San Damiano School was opened with 100 students. Today, the school provides an education for over 900 children.

But education didn't stop with the children. Through the years, many education courses were offered for the local people. Literacy courses were joined by a variety of courses including sewing, cooking, mechanics, cattle vaccination, bricklaying and soil conservation.



The Congregation in Brazil continues to grow. Pictured here are four North American and sixteen Brazilian members. Sister Ruth Berry (top row, fourth from left) is one of the original sisters sent to Brazil in 1963.



San Damiano School in Goiânia, Goiás, Brazil opened in 1970.



Irmã (Sister) Maria Diniz Gomes is a professor at the San Damiano School. She is also the Congregation's Regional Treasurer in Brazil.

Today, more than 46 years after its Brazilian beginning, Joliet Franciscans, both from North America and Brazil, serve in the States of Goiás and Tocantins in a variety of ministries.

Jail Ministry

As early as 1877, the Sisters worked with women prisoners in caring for the Chapel at Stateville Penitentiary. By 1924, the Sisters taught elementary school subjects, music fundamentals and shorthand to incarcerated women at Stateville. Twenty-one women were in the first class.



Sisters leaving Stateville Prison in 1954.



With the arrival of Fr. Gervase Brinkman, OFM, more Sisters became involved in the jail. (Fr. Gervase is pictured at the bottom center.)

The Sisters also composed music for the prison liturgical services. Sister Raphael Wand's Mass in Honor of Our Lady, which was later used nationally, was composed for singing at Stateville and bore the original title, "Mass of Our Lady of Joliet-Stateville." Banners were created for the prison chapel by one of the Sisters.

Father Gervase said, "The influence of the Sisters was greater than was at once apparent. They were objects of curiosity and memory. Seeing a Sister meant so much to a man who had not been to church for years. It recalled to him his grade school years and what the Sisters had taught him."

When Father Gervase Brinkman arrived as chaplain in the late 1940s, the Sisters' choir was formed to sing the Mass at the Stateville Prison. Eventually, choirs both in English and Spanish were formed from the prison population.



Sister M. Raphael wrote a Mass in honor of Our Lady of Joliet - Stateville in 1953 at the request of Fr. Gervase.

Ministry to the Incarcerated Continues

*T*he Sisters also became involved with youth in detention homes. Students were tutored in math and reading at the Youth Center on McDonough Street. At the Cook County Juvenile Detention Home, Sister Meg Guider counseled young Catholic girls two evenings a week. "I am present to these girls," she said. "I help them find out what they are afraid of and what they should be afraid of."



Sister Vivian Whitehead began the Center for Correctional Concerns at the Will County Jail in 1979.

*I*n 1979, Sister Vivian Whitehead, with the blessing of the Congregation's Governing Board, established the Center for Correctional Concerns at the Will County Jail. Since its beginning, more than 1,800 residents have received their (GED) High School Equivalency Diploma while incarcerated. Now in its 30th year, the Center provides counseling, education and social services for the incarcerated residents, assists them after their release and provides citizens with opportunities for education and action relating to the criminal justice system.

*R*egardless of who we are, where we come from or what choices we make in life, we are all children of God. Throughout their history, the Joliet Franciscans have ministered to people wherever they are called to do so. This includes ministering to the incarcerated.

*S*ister Juanita Ujcik recently received the Pax Joliet Award from the Diocese of Joliet for her work at the Center for Correctional Concerns. In her acceptance speech, Sister Juanita said, "I accept this award on behalf of all the people who have served the incarcerated through the years, especially our Sisters who started preparing the altars on Collins street in the 1890s, the Sisters who taught on McDonough street, who sang at Stateville, to the Sisters who prayed and provided services at the Center for Correctional Concerns, and for the other men and women who have worked in this diocese for many years."



Sister Juanita Ujcik helps an inmate at the Will County Jail.

Mother Alfred's Dream Realized



Sister Victoria stayed in the Red Cliff area for 68 years, arriving there in 1890. She returned to Joliet in 1958 because of sickness and died in 1962 at the age of 94.



When Mother Alfred came to the United States, her hope had been to work with the Native Americans in Wisconsin. Although she herself would never achieve this goal, beginning in 1879 and continuing still today, Joliet Franciscans have committed themselves to serving the people of the Bayfield and Red Cliff area of Northern Wisconsin.

Sister Victoria was 23 years old when she made her first profession.

In 1879, the Sisters were invited to join the Franciscan Fathers of the Sacred Heart Province of St. Louis in establishing the first Catholic school in the Bayfield-Red Cliff area. A small two-room log cabin located halfway between Bayfield and Red Cliff served as both the school and the Sisters' home. Over the next few years, the Sisters would open more schools in the area.

In 1880, the Congregation took charge of the government-owned Indian Day School at Buffalo Bay, which was on the Red Cliff Reservation. Two of the earliest teachers at the school were Sister Seraphia Reinick and Sister Victoria Steidl, who served in Red Cliff for 37 and 68 years respectively. In appreciation for their many years of service, the Sisters were adopted into the Chippewa tribe in a special ceremony.



Sister Johanna Albert taught sewing at St. Mary's Institute in Bayfield.

Ministry in Bayfield Continues

From the very beginning, maintenance of the Indian Day School depended on the kindness of others. The school was sold in 1893 and a new school was built and paid for partially by a government contract. The government also provided books and much of the furnishings. The Sisters needed to find the means for other necessities. Eventually, the government abolished the Indian Day School, but the people agreed to work with the priests and Sisters to find ways through fundraising to keep the school open.



Sister Josepha Redlinger's class at Holy Family School in 1904.



On March 29, 1947, St. Francis of Assisi Church, school, convent and rectory all burned to the ground in Red Cliff. In 1960, after much prayer and deliberation, a decision was made by the Congregation to consolidate St. Francis of Assisi School in Red Cliff and Holy Family School in Bayfield.

Some Sisters were born, lived and died in the Bayfield area. The first Native American Sister was Sister Cordula Neveaux who was educated by the Sisters in Bayfield and joined the Congregation in 1891. Today, another Native American, Sister Grace Ann Rabideau, can be found working in the same Bayfield area.

Looking back to the beginning of the Congregation's history in Bayfield, the Sisters have collectively ministered to the Native American population for over 900 years and counting!



Top: Sr. Cordula and Sr. Grace Ann in 1966.



Left: Sr. Grace Ann working in the soup kitchen at Holy Family in Bayfield.

St. Clare House Of Prayer

The St. Clare House of Prayer first opened in 1968 in Kankakee, Illinois. Over its 40-year history, it became a place where Sisters and others could renew their spirits in peaceful surroundings. Although it closed in the summer of 2008, by the end of the same year it reopened in Joliet on Indianwood Lane, returning to its original roots as a contemplative community. On August 25, 2011, St. Clare House of Prayer moved to the Village at Our Lady of Angels. The St. Clare House of Prayer is a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate.



Sr. Dorothy Clare Zuleski, Sr. Albert Marie Papesh,
Sr. Anita Beloin and Sr. Helen Vahling

Our Lady of Angels Village

In 2008, the Joliet Franciscans opened Our Lady of Angels Village, the only faith-based independent living community within Joliet. It is designed specifically for seniors who are able to live independently in the comfort of their own private home.

*O*ur Lady of Angels Village is owned and operated by the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate.



Franciscan Learning Center

Education remains an important ministry of the Joliet Franciscans. In 1979, the Sisters opened the Franciscan Learning Center which provides a faith-based pre-school and kindergarten education. Some of the Center's earliest students now send their own children to the school.

The Franciscan Learning Center is a sponsored institution of the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate.



Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home

Like Mother Alfred, Mother Borromeo Mack, the General Superior from 1960 – 1968, was a woman with an eye to the future needs of the Congregation.

In the early 1960s, with many of the Sisters aging, Mother Borromeo made the decision to build a new facility that would serve as a retirement home for the Congregation, as well as for lay seniors. There was sufficient land near Guardian Angel Home and St. Francis Academy (now JCA) to build upon. Our Lady of Angels opened its doors in January 1962, and the Sisters were moved from the Motherhouse's infirmary to their new home.

Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home is a sponsored institution of the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate.



St. Mary's School *Fairfield, Alabama*

In September, 1945, the Joliet Franciscans began a teaching ministry in St. Mary's all-black school in Fairfield, Alabama. Two small rooms at the rear of the church were set up by the pastor. Not a single Catholic child was enrolled at that time. By the end of 1962, the school was operating in a newly-built, two-story brick building in a parish of over four hundred baptized Catholics.

The Sisters served at St. Mary's School until 1980. A total of forty-eight Sisters, many still in active ministry today, were part of St. Mary's history over the years.



Reflecting on the Congregation's History

As you review the pages of our Congregation history, what themes emerge?

How do some of these themes relate to your own life experience?

What contributions have the Sisters made, over the years, to the needs of the world in which they found themselves?

How have the needs changed in the present day?

Which of these ministries attract and/or inspire you?

What questions might you ask of the Sisters in those pictures?



Artwork by Sr. Kay Francis Berger, OSF

SYMBOLS OF THE CONGREGATION

The Seal of Our Congregation



The official Congregational seal was designed in 1922 and remains the same in almost every detail. The crest is encircled with the official title of the Congregation: *Congregation Tertii Ordinis Sancti Francisci Immaculatae + Jolietensis +*. (The seal is shown here with the title translated into English: *Congregation of the Third Order of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate + Joliet +*.)

The Latin inscription around the crest, *Prima unctio et Postea Speculatio*, was interpreted by the Rev. James Meyer, O.F.M., in reply to a letter of the Secretary General of the Congregation in 1932, as "The first thing in importance is unction (with the grace of God and a good life); after that (and only after that) let our attention turn to study." This motto has its origin in the very life of St. Francis. It is contained in his Rule of 1223, Chapter 10.

A symbolic representation of the Congregation is expressed in the crest. An explanation of the four sections of the crest is as follows:

Lower Left: Traditional coat of arms of the Franciscan Order: crossed hands of Christ and St. Francis surmounted by the cross.

Lower Right: The Word, the Book of the Gospels, with the prayer of St. Francis: *Deus Meus et Omnia* ("My God and My All").

Upper Right: The *fleur de lis* symbolizes the Virgin Mother Mary; the crescent, distinguishing her as the "Immaculate."

Upper Left: The two-arched bridge spanning the Des Plaines River, representing the city of Joliet, the site of the Congregation's original foundation. (Taken from the official seal of the city of Joliet.)

In the fall of 1971, the Congregation had the crest cast in metal. The 1972 General Chapter inaugurated its use as an official symbol which, when worn as a pin or a medallion, identifies a Sister of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate, Joliet, Illinois.

Reflecting on the Symbol of the Congregation

Reflect on the symbols on the shield and the surrounding text on the Congregation seal. The text is so Franciscan! When more and more brothers who were educated came to join Francis, he was faced with what he thought was an enormous threat to the Poverty that he embraced. How could they imitate the poor Christ and own books? If they had books they would have to have houses- - it went on and on. But finally, he gave in, on one condition" Prima unction, postea speculation! First love, then study! What kind of meaning does this have for you in your day to day life, for your work or volunteer ministries?

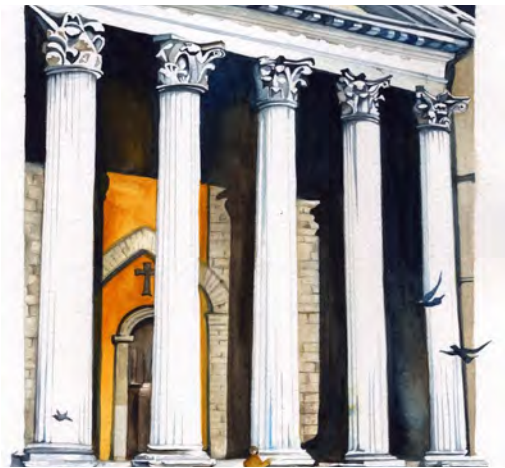
ADMINISTRATION AND STRUCTURE

Central Administration

The Central Administration of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate is composed of the elected officers who form the Governing Board, namely the President, who is the General Superior, and no fewer than three nor more than five Councilors and appointed members, namely, the General Secretary, the general Treasurer, and any other appointed officer(s) approved by the general Chapter.

Governing Board

The Governing Board is composed of the President and the Councilors. They bear the responsibility for implementation of the norms of the General Chapter, the coordination of the Congregation activities and development programs: the establishment of policies, the appointment of necessary personnel in various offices and of committees; the maintenance of the financial stability of the Congregation and its temporal goods; guidance of the mission direction of the Congregation in terms of the needs of the Church and society; continual concern for the growth and development of the individual Sister, the local community, and the Congregation as a whole; the coordination and ratification of the ministry activity and living situations of the Sisters.



"Assisi City Square"
Artwork by Associate Karen Kietzman

President

The President is the general Superior of the Congregation and President of the Governing Board, exercising the highest authority during her term of office. She must be perpetually professed for at least six years. She is the legal President of the Congregation according to the laws of the Church, the spirit and traditions of the Congregation, these Constitutions, and the norms of the Chapter.

Coordinator

A Coordinator is appointed as the immediate superior by the President in consultation with the Councilors. She is the official liaison with the major superior, the President of the Congregation. A Sister serving in ministry as a Coordinator has a term of four years, renewable once. A Councilor may serve as a Coordinator.

Reflecting on the Administration of the Congregation

In the early course of your orientation you may meet some of the Sisters in Administration. At some point you may be able to visit the Joliet Franciscan Center with your Companion. There you will find two halls in which the pictures of all the former Mother Superiors, now called Presidents, of the Congregation are hung. It makes a wonderful “station walk” to start with the picture of Mother Alfred and move forward to the present. There is also an archive room carefully preserving the story of the Sisters with photos, artifacts, books and other pertinent memorabilia.

General Chapter

The Sisters, as Franciscans in a state of ongoing conversion, continue to ask: “Who are we? How are we doing the work of God’s Kingdom? What are the needs of the times? How can we do better?” So they put a lot of time into prayer, reflection, communal study and discussion as they prepare for and convene the General Chapter every four years. The Chapter is reserved for vowed members who are elected as delegates by the Congregation. Non-delegate Sisters and Associates may come as observers. What comes out of the Chapter deeply affects and enriches Sisters, Associates and the world!

*Who are we? How are we doing
the work of God’s Kingdom? What
are the needs of the times? How
can we do better?*

During the Chapter of 2012 several Chapter Commitments were proposed and confirmed by the Chapter delegates:

“Desiring to be attentive to the Spirit of God in our lives we commit ourselves to:

-living mindfully,

-developing relationships that are reverent and reconciling,

-embracing the ministry of presence, and

-journeying courageously together into our unfolding future,

- i. To continue deep conversation about significant matters and Franciscan/Clarean spirituality wherever we gather.
- ii. To create conditions in which people find their way to the Gospel and in which they can be Gospel.
- iii. To creatively pursue collaborative possibilities with others to further the Reign of God.
- iv. To explore ways to be Franciscan/Clarean peace-makers and bridge builders within the institutional Church.

Reflecting on the 2012 General Chapter

You will notice that the 2012 Chapter committed us to ways of “being attentive to the Spirit of God”. These commitments each became the focus of a year through weekly reminders, prayer services, and large and small community gatherings. Through the monthly newsletter, *Staying Connected*, and the quarterly magazine, *Confianza*, we read stories of Sisters and Associates who are experiencing and carrying out these commitments.

As you consider these 2012 Chapter goals, which ones stand out and challenge you? Which can you relate to in your personal life?



FORMATION IN RELIGIOUS LIFE TODAY

People continue to be called to religious life. These pages are offered as information about Sisters in general. Following are the steps required to become a Joliet Franciscan Sister.

Initial Contact: A woman discerning religious life as a Sister spends time getting to know the Congregation.

Candidate: A candidate is a woman who, after seriously discerning the call to religious life, decides to apply for admission into the Congregation.

Affiliate (Pre-Novice): An affiliate lives with the Sisters while together they determine if the religious life is a good fit for her.

Novice: The Novitiate stage lasts for two years. Time is spent in prayer, reflection and study, as well as exploring different ministerial options.

Temporary Profession: Temporary Profession means that the novice enters into initial membership in the Congregation, for a designated period of time, by professing vows of poverty, chastity and obedience as a Sister.

Final Profession: At final profession, a Sister makes a permanent commitment to God and to religious life by professing the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience for life.

It could take twelve or more years from the initial contact to final profession before becoming a member of the Joliet Franciscans.

Nun...Sister...What's the Difference?

There isn't one, you say? Actually, there is. Although the word "nun" is commonly used to describe all "women religious" in the Catholic Church, there is a difference between the terms "nun" and "religious sister."



- ◇ A Catholic nun lives a cloistered or semi-cloistered life. Her life is devoted to prayer and ministry within the monastery. There might be hours each day spent in silence. She professes vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience. Nuns are addressed as "Sister". An example of a cloistered order of nuns is the Poor Clares.
- ◇ A Catholic Sister lives, works and ministers within the general population of the world. She is also addressed as "Sister." She professes vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience. An example of a Congregation of Sisters is the Joliet Franciscans.

Reflecting on Your Experience with Sisters

What experiences have you had with Sisters?

What words come to mind when you think about Sisters?

What has a Sister been for you?

What positive message did the Sisters give to society when they no longer wore habits?

How might we, as lay people who value and believe in Franciscan spirituality also the same positive messages to others?



Artwork By Associate Elizabeth Bach Luong

Chapter 3: Our Franciscan Roots

This Chapter offers an overview of Francis and Clare's lives, including a listing of books that guide our reflection on their legacy.



"San Damiano"

Artwork by Associate Karen Kietzman

St. Francis of Assisi

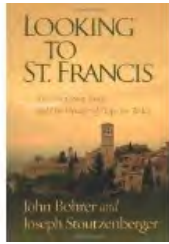


Artwork by Sr. Kay Francis Berger, OSF

- 1181 or 1182 Born at Assisi in Umbria, son of Pietro and Giovanna Bernadone; baptized John and called Francesco.
- 1201-1202 Joined war between Assisi and Perugia; taken prisoner in the battle of Collestrada; ransomed by his father.
- 1205 Joined army; became ill in Spoleto; had a vision marking the beginning of his conversion; returned to Assisi; sought solitude; made pilgrimage to Rome; joined beggars at St. Peter's.
- 1206 Jesus spoke to Francis from the crucifix in San Damiano Church; his father, Pietro demanded restitution of money spent; Francis appealed to the Bishop of Assisi, assumed a hermit's habit and renounced his hereditary rights.
- 1207 Dedicated to prayer and solitude, Francis helped lepers and restored 3 churches (San Damiano, San Pietro, Portiuncula).
- 1209 During Mass in the Chapel of St. Mary of the Angels, the Gospel revealed Francis' task; the words of Christ became the Order's First Rule.
- 1210 Francis and eleven followers went to Rome; Pope Innocent III verbally approved the Rule.
- 1212 Francis received Clare's commitment to the Franciscan way of life.
- 1219-1220 Francis preached to the Sultan of Egypt; returned to Italy.
- 1223 Second Rule approved by Pope Honorius III.
- 1223 First crib was set up at Christmas midnight Mass in Greccio.
- 1224 Francis received the stigmata on Mt. Alverno.
- 1226 Francis returned to Assisi; composed the "Canticle of Creatures" as he was dying at the Portiuncula.
- 1226 Francis died on October 3 and was interred at the church of St. George.
- 1228 Francis was canonized in Assisi by Pope Gregory IX.

Sources: *The Francis Book* by Roy M. Gasnick, O.F.M.
The Life and Times of St. Francis by Augustino Ghiliardi

A Brief Review of Books on the Life of St. Francis

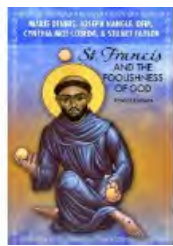


Bohrer, J. and Stoutzenberger, J (2014) *Looking to St. Francis: The Man from Assisi and His Message of Hope for Today*

This book connects two worlds: the medieval and the contemporary. The authors show the similarities between the two eras and brings relevant meaning to stories we know well. Francis wrote: “Preach the Gospel always. When necessary use words.” These words portray the Gospel through Francis’ eyes. In practical ways, the authors help us see how to apply Francis’ spirituality to issues we face. Its 192 easy-to-read pages include reflective questions after each chapter to help process its messages.



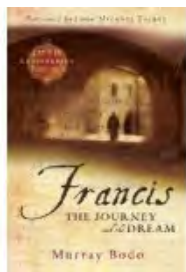
Artwork by Sr. Kay Francis Berger, OSF



Dennis, M., Nangle, J., Moe-Lobeda, C. and Taylor, St. (1993). *St. Francis and the Foolishness of God*.

The audience, as the authors state, is “primarily the non-poor who wish to understand the meaning of Christian commitment in an increasingly impoverished world.” (p. 7) Their approach is framed by two realities: Francis the man of paradoxes: free and spontaneous, yet ever loyal to the institutional church, fully alive, yet embraced suffering, a true lover who chose celibacy, born in affluence, embraced literal poverty and Francis the sentimental and popular man who had joy, love for nature and familiarity with animals. (p.7) Although now an older book, it is used by some Congregations for their Associate Formation because, while describing Francis, it blends theological reflection with scripture, and adds reflective questions that guide one’s self-growth.

Bodo, M. (2011). *Francis The Journey and the Dream* (40th Anniversary Edition)



Another book used in Associate Formation is Bodo’s, *The Journey and the Dream*. Now over 40 years old, this book is probably the most known and favored story of St. Francis of Assisi. It simply tells stories from Francis’ life—often the romantic sides that have endured forever and helped establish the garden statues; it does not have the historical depth needed to be called a historical biography. It can be considered poetic prose, with the license of romanticism.

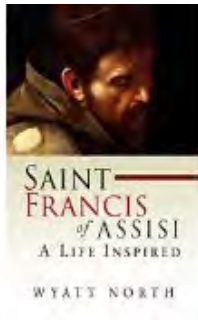
Critics have called it “profound and beautiful,” while others find it sappy and fanatical. Some chapters offer deep reflective thought on Francis’ simple yet complex dedication to Christ Jesus while others present Francis as almost simple-minded.



Cunningham, L.S. (2002) *Francis of Assisi Performing the Gospel Life*

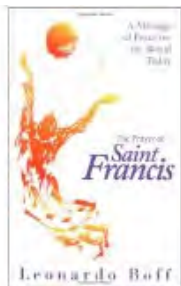
Cunningham, a theology professor at the University of Notre Dame, combines a scholarly and reflective view of Francis of Assisi. He avoids the sensationalism and romanticism of Francis found in some books which create a simple-minded and a naively focused fanatic. His writing is intellectual and periodically Cunningham uses theological and obscure language to describe basic principles from which Francis lived.

His description of the word *spiritual* might be questioned by some. He believes those who call themselves *spiritual* are types who favor concrete statues of Francis found in garden centers.



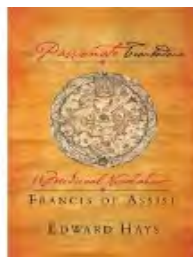
North, W. (2014). *Saint Francis of Assisi, A Life Inspired*

Similar in its straight-forwardness to Julian's book, North explores classic spiritual themes, blending the medieval world and the modern world. It is not a historical biography since its chapters dwell on themes and/or major events carried through in Francis' life rather than a series of chronological happenings. It ends with a discussion on the spirituality of Pope Francis and its contemporary application. It is a fast read with large print. (140 pages)



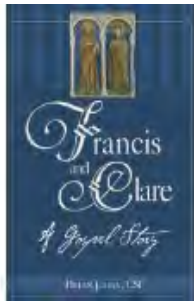
Boff, L. (2001). *The Prayer of Saint Francis: A Message of Peace for the World Today*

Specifically focused on the Peace Prayer of St. Francis, Boff titles each chapter with a line from the prayer. The chapters provide reflective reflections and end with a prayer. It provides meditative reading for anyone who values the message of the Peace Prayer.



Hays, E. (2004) *The Passionate Troubadour: A Medieval Novel about Francis of Assisi*

If you like historical novels and are intrigued by St. Francis, this work is a welcoming read. A 638 page narrative, it captures St. Francis as earthy and robust rather than a hermit-like fanatic. It is the story of a man with a human struggle—to find meaning in his life, facing real-life doubts about who he is and is challenged to become. It contains rich medieval detailing and a huge cast of supporting characters all of which brings depth to already known stories of St. Francis. Hayes takes creative license in detailing historical events and, for the most part, enhances rather than diminishes one's knowledge about the saint.



Julian, H. (2001) *Francis and Clare, A Gospel Story*

A straight-forward view of the lives of Francis and Clare, Julian intertwines their stories in a simple narrative, fast, easy and factual reading. Julian's work is not one of poetic language, nor does she offer reflective thought. It is a book of stories well known in Franciscan tradition of "God at work with his chosen people." She ends this short book of 133 pages with this quote from St. Francis, "I have done what was mine to do; may Christ teach you what you are to do."



Bodo, M. and Saint Sing, S. (1996). *Francis and Clare of Assisi: Following Our Pilgrim Hearts*

This book is organized as a seven-session retreat which could adapt well to regional group meetings or for private self-reflection. Bodo and Saint Sing place the voices of Francis and Clare as the retreat directors and lead readers down the medieval pathway of Assisi as they simulate images along this spiritual pilgrimage. Each chapter ends with reflective questions and a closing prayer.

Their reflections bring Assisi to life and inspire the pilgrim heart. For those seeking to learn about the *lives* of Francis and Clare, this book would not be fully satisfying; instead it brings the *heart* of Francis alive without the usual biographic and chronological pattern.

Francis and Clare is one in a series of "A Retreat With" books. Other books include Thomas Merton, Gerrard Manley Hopkins, Therese of Lisieux and Pope John XXIII.



"Backyard in Assisi"

Artwork by Associate Karen Kietzman

St. Clare of Assisi

HIGHLIGHTS IN THE LIFE OF CLARE

1193-4 - 1210. Birth and Young Life

Clare of Assisi was the first of three daughters born to Favarone and Hortulana of the noble clan of Offreduccio. Unlike Francis, whose father was a merchant, Clare belonged to the *maiores*, the wealthy class of nobility. Her family was well known and respected. Her father was a knight and her mother was known for her pious practices and her care for the poor. Clare was expected to prepare herself for a suitable marriage within her own class. Growing up, Clare showed signs of religious fervor and openly deflected the pursuits of her suitors. At some point she sold her inheritance and gave everything to the poor.



Artwork by Sr. Kay Francis Berger, OSF

1211. Meeting and Following Francis

In the early part of this year Clare, always with a companion, began to meet secretly with Francis. He instructed her to go to the Cathedral Mass on Palm Sunday, dressed in her finery. Later she was to come to him and the Brothers down to their little chapel, the Portiuncula. In the darkness of an Italian night, Francis received her vows, tonsured her, and sent her to a nearby Abbey. It didn't take long for her family to come after her but they were not able to prevail against her. In fact, her sister soon joined her, not without a struggle from the family.

1212 - 1215. The Early Years at San Damiano

Francis soon provided for Clare and her sister, Agnes, to live at San Damiano. Their example of holiness and poverty quickly inspired women to follow them. Even young men were amazed at the rigorous life of these women and began to join the Brothers. At the insistence of Francis, Clare accepted the office of abbess at this time. In the older traditions of monastic life the women religious were usually wealthy and often had servants. The monasteries owned land and employed servants and farmers. But the Poor Sisters owned nothing and depended on the work of their hands and whatever food the Brothers could spare. San Damiano was situated at a busy crossroad outside the walls of Assisi. Soon the people came to ask for prayers and Clare became known as a healer.



Artwork by Sr. Kay Francis Berger, OSF

1215 - 1220. The Middle Years

Francis returned from the Holy Land in 1220. Not too much is recorded about the contacts Francis and Clare may have had during this period, but some major changes occurred in both Orders, one of which was that Clare received from Pope Innocent III the *Privilege of Poverty*. This was a significant accomplishment that set her way of life apart from the traditional monastic life of the times. The male clerics could hardly believe that women could live this kind of radical poverty. Clare, with love and compassion, directed her Sisters who came from different political cultures and both high and low states of life, to create a community of mutual love according to the Gospel.

1221 - 1224. The Later Years of Francis' Life

Both Orders were growing rapidly. Among the Brothers there was controversy and disagreement about the meaning of Poverty. Appropriate relations between the Brothers and the Sisters became an issue since there was the possibility that scandal might be given. The Poor Sisters longed for spiritual direction and preaching from the Brothers, particularly from Francis himself. One story tells how Francis finally consented to "preach." The Sisters arrived to hear his sermon. Francis sat down and had the Brothers sprinkle him with ashes as he prayed the *Miserere*, Ps 51. The Sisters got the message. Another time the Brothers had stopped coming to give them spiritual support, and only left loaves of bread at the door for them. Clare sent the bread back with the message that if they refused the Sisters spiritual support, the Sisters would not accept material support from them. These stories give us some idea of the holy tensions springing from these new ways of living the Gospel in community. It is also clear that Francis and Clare were equal partners, led by the Spirit in this new endeavor.

1224 - 1226. The Final Years with Francis

Almost at the same time that Francis received the Stigmata, Clare contracted a debilitating illness that never left her. As Francis' bodily health deteriorated he was moved to a hut near San Damiano. Here he wrote and sang the glorious Canticle of Brother Sun. Feeling the love and concern of the Sisters for him, he also composed a song for them. Clare sent word and begged to be able to see him one more time. He agreed but she would "see" him only after he died as his body was carried in procession past San Damiano for burial. That vision would sustain her through the next twenty seven years of her life as she courageously and lovingly carried out the common vocation she and Francis shared.

1227 - 1253. Clare of Assisi, Co-foundress of Franciscan/Clarean Spirituality

In the coming years, though suffering from illness and the austerity of her form of life, Clare remained strong in spirit and faithful to the original call of the Poor Christ. The communities she formed included women from all social classes of the time and they were all expected to treat and love each other with a love greater than a mother's love. Clare modeled this for them, finding no task too lowly, from washing their feet, caring for them when they were ill, and tending their wounds. From this humble position, she debated with and counseled prelates and Popes, as well as Elias, the first successor to Francis. The fame of her holiness spread beyond Italy to other countries of Europe. All this time she interacted with Popes, mainly, but not exclusively, over the Rule she was writing and revising. The controversy about the Rule centered on the degree of Poverty that the Poor Sisters could sustain. Back and forth they went until finally, two days before she died, Pope Innocent IV approved her Rule, the first Rule written by a woman for women. On August 11, 1253, surrounded by her Sisters, she became one with the Poor Christ of the Incarnation, the Passion and Resurrection, and entered into eternal life. Her Sisters kept her last words in their hearts, words that can grace all of us today:

"Go securely and in peace, my blessed soul. The One who has created you and made you holy has always loved you tenderly as a mother her dear child. And You, Lord, are blessed because You have created me."

August to October 1255. The Canonization of Clare

Canonization took place sometime between these dates although the process began three months after she died. Pope Innocent was ready to canonize her immediately after her death at her funeral Mass but was convinced to adhere to the process of the time.

Even so, this was completed much sooner than was common in the thirteenth century. It attests to the cry of the people that Clare was their "saint" already.

—Compiled by Associate Jeanne Foley

SOURCES FOR THE TIMELINE

Carney, M. (1993). *The First Franciscan Woman, Clare of Assisi & Her Form of Life*, Franciscan Press, Quincy, IL.

Cavazos-Gonzalez, G. (2010) *Greater Than a Mother's Love, The Spirituality of Francis and Clare of Assisi*, University of Scranton Press.

Bartoli, M. (2010) trans. Sister Frances Teresa Downing, OSC, *Saint Clare, Beyond the Legend*, St. Anthony Messenger Press, Cincinnati, OH.



Photo by Sr. Marianne Saeig, OSF

Additional Books On Clare



Delio I. (2007). *Clare of Assisi, A Heart Full of Love*, 2007, 129 pp.

This book takes you deep into the prayer, contemplation and spirituality of St. Clare as it can apply to us in today's world. The chapters are fairly short and lend themselves to personal and group reflection. Each chapter is followed by Questions for Reflection. This book is to be read very slowly and prayerfully!



Ledoux, C. 2003) trans by Colette Joly Dees, *Clare of Assisi, Her Spirituality Revealed in Her Letters*, 125 pp.

Clare probably wrote many letters to the Poor Sisters' convents that sprang up all over Europe, but the only letters that have been preserved are the ones to Agnes of Prague, daughter of the King of Bohemia, who had many suitors but chose to live religious life as Clare. Ledoux opens with a timeline and summary of Clare's life. The author's reflections on these letters are divided into two parts: who we are as human beings and how we can be united to God through The Poor Christ.

Miller, R. and Peterson, I. (1994) *Praying with Clare of Assisi*. 114 pp.



These two well known Rochester Franciscans wrote eleven meditations on subjects such as: Service to Others, The Privilege of Poverty, Spiritual Friendship, The Strength of the Eucharist, to name a few. Directions are given at the beginning as to how to engage in prayer as Clare would, both for yourself personally, or with a group. Highly recommended for regional groups, face to face or by phone. This is a companion book to *Praying with Francis of Assisi* listed in the books about Francis.



*Fresco of Saint Clare and Sisters of her order,
Church of San Damiano, Assisi*

Reflecting on Francis and Clare

Have you a favorite book about Francis and/or Clare?

How familiar are you with their life stories?

Which events stand out for you? Why are you attracted to them?

How relevant are they for our modern world?

If you have had contact with other Orders such as Benedictines, Dominicans, Carmelites, etc., what differences do you know about their cultures and spirituality?



Artwork by Sr. Kay Francis Berrger, OSF

Chapter 4: Our Associate Relationship

VISION STATEMENT

As Associates of the Sisters of St. Francis,
we yield to the Spirit who forms us
in the Gospel values of
prayer, simplicity, poverty, charity and justice,
as modeled in times past by Francis and Clare, and
as lived in modern times by Mother Alfred Moes
and the women who follow her today.
We believe that we are part of a new creation
of Associates and vowed members
which is coming to birth in the Church,
in the world, and in this particular Congregation

COMMITMENT STATEMENT

In solidarity with the
Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate,
we commit ourselves through relationship
to living more fully the mystery of community
where we, as Associates,
though separated by time, space and lifestyles,
are drawn together through prayer, and
bound together through mutual support.
As baptized Christians, we commit ourselves
to rebuild the Church in the image of Jesus,
and to discover the presence of the Spirit in the world.
Rejoicing in the Franciscan Clarean charism
which strengthens and encourages us,
we commit ourselves
to deepen and celebrate our faith and
to en flesh the ideals of the Gospel
and the spiritualities of Francis and Clare
among our families, friends and
all those with whom we interact daily.
As advocates with and for the poor and oppressed,
wherever they may be,
we commit ourselves to work for peace, justice
and the integrity of creation.

Reflecting on the Associates' Vision and Commitment Statements

Read the Vision and Commitment statements out loud, slowly, hearing the words, repeating phrases that talk to you.

- 1. How do you see Associates being “part of a new creation”? societally?*
- 2. How do you see yourself as “part of a new creation”? What could it actually mean in your own world—“family, friends and all those we interact with daily”...?*
- 3. What does “rebuild the Church” mean in our era? in your life?*
- 4. Which part of the commitment is natural to what you tend to do?*
- 5. Which part of the commitment will be more challenging?*
- 6. What meaning will this commitment have for you?*

HISTORY OF THE ASSOCIATE RELATIONSHIP



Vatican II called all Christians to a universal holiness by virtue of their Baptism. Women and men in religious life set about rediscovering their roots and the lives of their founders. Out of this emerged new and creative ways of being vowed religious. The laity responded to the Holy Spirit and began to minister in ways that had never been open to them before. Into this bubbling pot of graced energy, the paths of many religious and laity began to cross. As they worked together, prayed together and responded to the times, some lay people, in small numbers at first, began to request of their vowed religious co-workers or friends, a way to join them as a kind of lay companion. They felt a desire to share and learn more about the unique spirituality each Congregation espouses, its charism, its particular gift to the Church.

Soon the numbers grew, and today there are more than 45,000 Associates in North America. What is called the Associate Movement is growing around the world.

The Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate (Joliet Franciscans) welcomed their first Associate over 40 years ago and presently there are over 150 Joliet Franciscan Associates across the United States and in the interior of Brazil where the Sisters have served for the last 50 years.

The laity responded to the Holy Spirit and began to minister in ways that had never been open to them before.

By sharing the Congregation's charism and mission with the Associates, Sisters broaden the scope of their efforts to live the Gospel of Jesus and are mutually enriched through prayer, friendship and service. The Joliet Franciscans have a saying, "Where one of us is, we all are". Associates extend the mission of the Congregation in a unique way, especially as Franciscans.

In 1974, Margaret Guider became our first Associate. She went to serve with our Sisters in Brazil as a volunteer lay missionary. Upon her return to the United States she entered the Congregation. During the 1970s, a number of former members of the Congregation became Associates. Some were married and raising families, but all had remained Franciscans "at heart." It was during this time that the first Director of Associates was appointed.

Starting in the 1980s the demographics began to change significantly. Individuals interested in becoming Associates came from a variety of backgrounds. Some were lay women, some lay men, some ordained deacons or priests; others were family members, and an increasing number were those who had labored alongside our Joliet Franciscan Sisters as co-workers in schools, parishes, prayer groups, hospitals, retirement homes, offices, residence halls, and faith-based organizations. Regardless of age, background, location, or form of life, the one thing that our Associates shared in common was a strong attraction to the Franciscan spirit of prayer, community and ministry that they witnessed and experienced in their encounters and relationships with one or more Joliet Franciscans. Even though some had never been in Joliet, they were drawn to the spirituality, mission and vision of the Franciscan Sisters they knew and loved. Today, the attraction remains and it is not only Sisters but Associates who witness the charism that calls others.

Since the beginning of the Associate program, over 210 individuals have been welcomed into the relationship. Among the 150 Associates that are active today, 128 live in 14 different states across the United States. Twenty-two Associates live in the state of Goiás Brazil, South America. Although the number changes as Candidates join and Associates die, on average, the percentages remain the same: 84% are women and 14% are men. Five former Associates have become vowed members; some Associates have died and a few have chosen not to renew.

In 2004, ten individuals from our missions in Brazil were welcomed as Associates. Since that time 22 Brazilian men and women have made their commitments as Associates. Associates in Brazil call themselves *Collaborators* because the word *associate* in Portuguese means *member*. Canonically, Associates are not *members* of the Congregation.

The Brazilians Sisters and Associates live close to each other and interact together frequently, often daily, from attending Mass, to ministering, to eating together.

The governance of the Brazilians is directed by the Central Governing Board while the ministries, including the Associate Relationship, are managed by the Brazilians.



PROFILE OF AN ASSOCIATE



Coming from diverse backgrounds, our Associates are partners in mission who truly represent the world church. Aligning themselves in different ways with the vision, goals and values of the Sisters, they participate in God's mission by responding to the universal call to holiness. In their following of Jesus Christ, they share in the spiritual tradition of Francis and Clare as they embrace the missionary legacy of Mother Alfred Moes, the Congregation's foundress, and the Gospel witness of her Sisters – yesterday, today, and tomorrow.



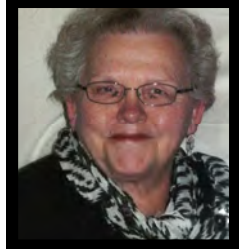
Associates have a common desire to deepen their spirituality through their relationship with the Sisters and other Associates. They continue to live their lives fully with family, work, and social obligations. Associates and Sisters meet in small and large gatherings and keep in touch in creative ways as Associates adapt the Congregation's vision, mission and charism to their own life situations.



Most are lay women and men, some of whom are married, widowed or divorced, some have never married. A few Associates are permanent deacons or priests. Women and men interested in applying to become Associates must be persons who:



- are at least 18 years of age or older.
- are of a Christian faith.
- desire to be in a formal relationship with the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate.
- remain financially and legally independent of the Congregation.



*Associates have a common desire
to deepen their spirituality
through their relationship with
the Sisters and other Associates.*

REASONS FOR BECOMING AN ASSOCIATE

Over the years, from large and small gatherings, conversations and more formal presentations, a common thread has emerged from Associates when asked why they became Associates. They seek a deeper relationship with God. In turn, Associates strongly desire to share in that journey with a Congregation whom, over 150 years, has lived the mission and spirit of St. Francis and St. Clare.

ENGAGING WITH THE CONGREGATION

Associates share in the mission and ministry of the Congregation.

Associates become a witness to Franciscan peace, joy and compassion.

Associates commit to daily prayer and meditation.

Associates gather in small and large groups with Sisters and other Associates.

Associates celebrate special events with Associates and Sisters.

Associates attend days of ongoing spiritual and personal renewal.



Through prayer, correspondence or visits, a Candidate forms a special relationship with a Companion, a Sister or Associate. This relationship is vital during initial orientation and may continue as long as the Companion and Associate desire. The Associate (and Candidates) may volunteer in Congregational ministries and services such as participating in a mission experience, peace and justice committee, environment sustaining program, and various other activities. Associates (and Candidates) are welcome at Congregation celebrations, special events and prayer services.



Every organization has its story. The pages of this manual describe our Associate Relationship. The Associate Movement is linked to Vatican II when Religious Congregations were challenged to look at their ministries differently. Many, like ours, expanded their ministries to foreign countries; we chose Brazil. In turn, Congregations opened their arms to embrace lay people, sharing their charism, in intimate, meaningful ways.

Reflecting on the Associate Relationship

- 1. In what way do you align with the profile of an Associate? How are you the same? How are you different?*
- 2. How do you see yourself engaging with the Congregation? What would you find hard to do? What would you want to add? How do you expect that these engagements will advance your spirituality?*
- 3. What concerns do you have about introducing this level of activity in your life?*

Chapter 5: Becoming an Associate

The process of becoming an Associate is a journey of mutual knowledge-gathering, self-discovery and prayer. Once an individual has committed to begin the orientation journey, the Director of Associates will help identify a Companion—a Sister or Associate—who will walk with the individual during orientation and formation. The Candidate and Companion will meet to review the mission and charism of the Congregation, explore Franciscan values and service, identify ways of being Franciscan, while living fully in the lay world, to determine if the Candidate sees himself/herself being connected with the Joliet Franciscans in order to continue one's spiritual journey.

STEPS TO BECOME AN ASSOCIATE

Phase 1: Initial Orientation

During this phase an individual interested in the Associate Relationship contacts the Director of Associates, completes an application form and responds to a series of reflection questions. She is interviewed by the Director of Associates so that each can understand what the individual is seeking and why the Associate Relationship with the Sisters of St. Francis may be the way to grow spiritually.

Phase 2: Reflective Transition

In this second phase, the individual Candidate begins discernment with a Companion—a Sister or Associate who will journey with her. For several months, the Candidate and Companion explore what being a Franciscan Associate means. This manual is used as an important tool in the journey. The Candidate is invited to attend many of the Associate and Congregational events.

Mid-point in this discernment, the Candidate decides whether she wishes to continue and, if so, writes a letter of intent to the Congregation President and requests letters of recommendation from three individuals.



Phase 3: Ongoing Formation

At the third phase, when the Candidate is accepted by the Congregation, she continues to meet with her Companion and receives Congregational mailings. As she prepares for the formal commitment, usually in the Spring, she composes a statement that describes how she wishes to journey with the Joliet Franciscans. Each year she composes a renewal statement and presents it at the yearly celebration of commitment. This statement is called a Mutual Agreement.



"Road in Assisi"
Artwork by Associate Karen Kietzman

When the Candidate is formally committed to being an Associate, she engages with the Sisters and Associates in prayer, ministries and events, as life style permits.

THE MUTUAL AGREEMENT

The commitment made between Associates and the Congregation is called a Mutual Agreement and acknowledges two movements of the Spirit:

1. the desire of Associates to deepen their Christian faith and witness by publicly associating themselves with the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate, thereby embracing the spiritual tradition of Francis and Clare, growing in relationship with other Associates and vowed members of the community, and furthering the evangelical values and ministries of the Congregation;
2. the willingness of the Congregation to recognize the Associates' desire, to affirm their commitment as an Associate, and to celebrate the Associate relationship as a blessing for the Congregation, the Church and the world.

Based on a common faith and mutual affection, the commitment signifies a spiritual bond that is made with confidence and trust on the part of the Associates and the Congregation for a designated period of time. Mutual Agreements are reviewed and renewed every year. At any time, Associates may choose not to renew their mutual agreement. Similarly, the Congregation may choose not to renew the commitment of an Associate.

Reflecting on Becoming an Associate

Contemplating this ideal of interdependence and mutuality as it relates to the Associate Relationship, you and your Companion are invited to prayerfully share and discuss the following.

Consider the personal hopes, fears, needs that you bring to the Joliet Franciscan Associate relationship, as well as your personal gifts and experiences which will enrich this relationship.

In your present circles of community (family, friends, workplace, church) how do you reverence each person's dignity and recognize that diversity among us marks the action of the Spirit? What challenges does this present?

*Living together in shared faith,
in common hope,
and in mutual love,
we aspire to witness to believers and unbelievers alike
that community is possible in Christ.
Constitutions 12*



Artwork by Sr. Kay Francis, Berger, OSF

THE ROLE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COMPANION

Each candidate chooses to be in close communication with a Sister or Associate during the period of discernment. In this way, mutual support, sharing, and prayer are encouraged. Communication can take the form of letters, phone calls, or personal visits. Occasionally, it may include shared ministry with the Sister or Associate or some form of Congregation service or activity.

Companions exemplify the following characteristics

Compassion – the ability to actively listen to what another is attempting to put into words: the ability to be with another in pain, as well as in joy.

Respect for Others – the ability to be with the candidate's stories even when the individual's way of thinking, believing or being are different from one's own. Can interact without judging. Keeps confidentiality sacred.

Simplicity of Spirit – has a straight-forward, no airs approach. Can be trusted for who she is.

Faith-Full – displays one's faith transparently. Is in touch with one's own story and has the ability to share parts of one's own journey when and where appropriate

Mutual Support – displays a willingness to share in mutuality, reciprocity, equality, and rapport. Does not act as therapist or teacher; is not superior to others.

Service-oriented – models an openness to serving others and responds to opportunities to serve the poor and needy

Knowledge of the Community – knows the Congregation well enough to speak to its history, its values and its charism

Reflecting on Companioning

1. How has this journey provided you and your Companion opportunities for "mutual knowledge-gathering, self-discovery and prayer?" with the Congregation?
2. Which Companion characteristics matter most to you and how have you have observed them in others?

THE ASSOCIATE PIN

Upon acceptance as an Associate, during the Commitment Ceremony, the Associate receives an official pin which identifies the individual as an Associate of the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate. The pin is given to serve as a reminder to a call, as an Associate, to share in the spirituality, mission and vision of the Congregation by serving God in the spirit of Saints Francis and Clare of Assisi and our foundress Mother Alfred Moes. The pin is explained:



The word “Associate” across the top of the pin is intended to identify the person as an Associate of the Congregation.

The left side of the pin depicts the traditional coat of arms of the Franciscan Order: crossed hands of Christ and St. Francis surmounted by the cross.

The right side of the pin depicts the *fleur de lis* (lily) symbolizing the Virgin Mother Mary and the crescent, distinguishing her as the “Immaculate.”

Reflecting on the Associate Pin

1. What significance do you put on wearing a pin or another symbol that represents an organization to which you belong?
2. Where do you expect you will wear this pin?

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Associates **are not** bound by the same obligation of the Sisters of the Congregation, nor are they beneficiaries of those Congregational resources reserved to the Sisters.

Unless otherwise mentioned, Associates pay their own expenses for days of recollection, conferences or other activities that have a fee. The Associates have no financial responsibility for the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate or their ministries or activities.

MUTUALITY IN THE ASSOCIATE RELATIONSHIP

The Congregation’s Book of Directives states: “The essential element of the associate relationship is the desire to recognize and nurture a mutual relationship which will witness to a Gospel vision of Christian living in the spirit of Clare and Francis of Assisi. ”

The Sisters to Associates

In living out this mutuality, through joined prayer, ministries of service and celebration of special events, the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate share with the Associates in the charism and spirit of St. Francis and St. Clare. These opportunities allow Associates to participate in the mission and spiritual legacy of the Congregation. When affirming an individual as an Associate of the Congregation, the Sisters exclaim their commitment on the Mutual Agreement:

We, the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate, agree to share with you, our Associate, our common mission of making Gospel living more present and credible in today's world by:

- Sharing our Franciscan charism, the heritage of our past, which encourages us to live as women of courage, strength and dedication*
- Sharing our Franciscan vision, as evidenced in the lives of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Clare*
- Sharing the challenge of our universal call to holiness through Baptism*
- Sharing our mutual concerns for one another, our world and our Church*

The Associates to the Sisters

Associates agree to participate in Congregation activities as circumstances allow. They complete their portion of the Mutual Agreement form, to “rejoice to share this common mission of making Gospel living more present and credible in our world,” and add their unique ways of living the Gospel, concluding with, “I will deepen and celebrate my faith while working for peace and justice.”

MAJOR ASSOCIATE EVENTS

Associates host two major yearly events: the Spring **Associate Weekend** and the Fall **Day of Reflection**. All Associates, Candidates and Sisters are invited to participate.



Associate Weekend is a Spring event that culminates with the new Associates being formally accepted by the Congregation at a special liturgy. On Saturday, the Associates, Sisters and invited guests come together for a day of spiritual renewal. It is a day to meet old and new friends and gather together in discussion and conversation. On Sunday, during the Celebration of the Eucharist, the new Associates formalize their mutual agreements and all Associates renew their agreements. A luncheon for family and friends follows the Mass.

In the Fall at the **Day of Reflection**, Associates, Candidates, Sisters and invited guests, again come together for prayer, discussion and community. This day ends with a liturgy or prayer service, liturgically celebrating who we are together.

Other than Congregation-business gatherings, Sisters' hosted events invite Associates (and Candidates) to attend. Spiritual events include retreat days, days of recollection, mornings and evenings of prayer. Social events include fall feasts, celebratory lunches and dinners, Jubilee day and other events throughout the year.

PRAYER ASSOCIATES

Associates no longer able to be active in regional groups, events or any Associate activities become Prayer Associates. As Prayer Associates, they remain spiritually connected with the Sisters and Associates. They are adopted by a Regional Group and continue to receive mailings and periodic greetings.

ENDING THE RELATIONSHIP

Periodically, there are life situations that may affect an Associate's need to withdraw from the Associate Relationship. The Associate discusses the situation with the Director of Associates and, if mutually determined, no longer completes her Mutual Agreement, terminating the relationship.

An Associate may be asked to leave the Associate Relationship if her behavior or moral judgment is in conflict with the mission and charism of the Congregation. The Director of Associates will contact the Associate to discuss the situation. If the situation cannot be resolved, a letter ending the relationship is sent to the Associate.



DEATH OF AN ASSOCIATE

Upon the death of an Associate, the Congregation secretary is notified so that the Sisters and the Associates can be informed. Every effort is made to have a representative of the Congregation attend the wake and funeral services, where a “Certificate of Membership” is presented to the family. An “In Memoriam” communication, complete with photograph of the Associate and a brief life biography is sent to the Sisters and Associates.

REGIONAL GATHERINGS

A regional gathering is a small faith community of Associates choosing to be together either face-to-face or by phone. Living out the words from our Commitment Statement, “we commit ourselves through relationship to living more fully the mystery of community where we, as Associates are drawn together through prayer and bound together through mutual support.” The purpose for gathering is to grow spiritually and support each other through prayer and discussion.

Face-to-face groups consist of 7-10 people and phone groups of 5-6 people. The face-to-face groups are designed so that Associates will travel as short a distance as possible to get to a designated site. The phone groups use a simple conferencing system and join with Associates from across the country.

Groups have suggested guidelines to support how often to gather, how long the meetings may be and what to discuss. There are readings, discussion topics and questions posted on the Associate website to guide discussions.

The regional gatherings are for Associates, although there may be locations and opportunities when Companion Sisters will attend. Candidates preparing to be Associates may attend the gatherings and the group may decide to use the materials the Candidate is using and pray and discuss the material together.



“Wherever two or more are gathered in my Name, there I am in their midst.” —Matt. 28:20

SERVICE AND MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

Living the Commitment Statement that we pledge, “As advocates with and for the poor and oppressed, wherever they may be, we commit ourselves to work for peace, justice and the integrity of creation,” Associates exemplify men and women of service and extend themselves in their parishes, their families, their communities and beyond.

Sometimes they join other Associates, for example at the yearly Blue Stem Earth Festival, or they travel to Mosses, Alabama, to minister to the poor. When there are several in the same parish, they sponsor service ministries together.

They volunteer in Congregational activities from ushering at events, to serving on task forces, to ministering to the sick and elderly at Our Lady of Angels.

Individual Associates minister in third world countries, volunteer time with the homeless, and serve as advocates for others in need.



Reflecting on Service and Ministry

1. What engagements attract you?
2. How are you/do you see yourself, getting involved?

Chapter 6: Franciscan and Clarean Prayer and Prayerful Living



PEOPLE OF PRAYER

The quotes in italics below are from the Constitutions of the Sisters and also the Rule of St. Francis that the Sisters follow. They are offered for your inspiration and personal application. They exemplify the universal call to holiness that we share. They inspire us to experience the charism, or the special gift, that the Holy Spirit gives the Church through the Franciscans. This chapter is written to engage you in prayer as you learn about prayer.

*We are called to be people of prayer.
We rely not on our own strength,
But on the power of a loving Father,
In whom we place complete trust.
Allowing the Spirit to form us
into the likeness of the Lord Jesus,
we respond to His call
that all be holy.
Our spirituality is actively apostolic.
Directed by Jesus to "pray always,"
We integrate our prayer and ministry,
Letting the spirit of prayer
Permeate the whole of our lives.*

Constitutions 13,14,15

YOUR PRAYERFUL LIFE EXPERIENCE

We know the actual experience of prayer is most intimate and most personal to us. Even though we may say or sing words to pray, or use words to describe our prayer, the reality of praying is far beyond the scope of words to express.

Pause for personal reflection of prayerful consciousness within you. If the following suggestions for reflection are helpful, use them. Use whatever means you wish to express what you know of prayer. Most of these suggestions are word-oriented. However, deep knowing frequently eludes words. It may be that some other form says prayer more effectively for you. For instance, other expressions may be more eloquent, such as music...gestures...postures...dance...color...line...shapes, textures, etc. The best expression may be a sacred object from nature or ritual moments. This is your experience---your expression.

*We value personal prayer and give time to it daily.
Like our Father Francis and in the spirit of his heart's cry:
"My God and My All!"
we acknowledge God as source of all our good and all our joy.
We contemplate Him in Scripture and in Sacrament,
in persons and events,
and in the wonders of nature,
recognizing all creation as part of the Franciscan's prayer.
Constitutions 19,20*

Resources for personal prayer:

Scripture: Lk 18.1; Jn 6:54, 6:63; Mt 6:31, 11:25

Merrill, N.C. *Psalms for Praying: An Invitation to Wholeness*. The Psalms re-visioned in familiar words, rhythms and contemporary meanings for our times. A much-needed resource for home liturgies and individual prayer.

Livingston, P.H. *Lessons of the Heart: Celebrating the Rhythms of Life* with a forward by Henri Nouwen. A warm and compelling book that enables readers to see themselves with fresh tenderness. A celebration of the sacred in everyday life.

Reflecting on Your Prayerful Life Experience

A way to begin: Develop a cluster of words, images, colors, sounds, movements, etc. that you associate with prayer. You may also wish to journal.

How has your sense of God challenged you, changed you, or evolved for you through the years?

What brings you most effectively to a prayerful sense of God's presence?

What kinds of situations, feelings, or attitudes diminish your sense of God's presence?

THE PRAYER OF FRANCIS AND CLARE



Artwork by Sr. Kay Francis Berger, OSF

As you prepare to become a Joliet Franciscan Associate or already an Associate seek a means to deepen your spiritual life, you may already have the experience of Franciscan prayer that may have come from a recent or long time connection with the Franciscan spirit. On the other hand, you may have been drawn to this journey through the friendship and/or example of a Franciscan Sister or Associate whom you know. You may not be familiar with the unique gifts of prayer inspired by Francis and Clare. In either case, we Franciscans welcome you to this pilgrimage. It is ongoing, always in conversion, evolving according to the needs of the world, walking in the footsteps of Jesus, the Christ.

*Everywhere and in each place, and in every season and each day,
the brothers and sisters are to have a true and humble faith.
From the depths of their inner life let them love, honor, adore, serve
praise, bless and glorify our most high and eternal
God who is Father and Son and Holy Spirit.
With all that they are, let them adore God because
“we should pray always and not lose heart” (Lk 18.1):
this is what God desires.*

Rule of St. Francis, Chapter III on Prayer (RIII)

(You can find a link to the TOR Rule at www.jolietfranciscans.org)



Painting by Joseph Malham

Communal Prayer: Praying with the Community

Fr. Edward Foley, OFM, Cap. describes how Franciscan prayer is a unique gift to the Church. First of all, he says prayer is *communal*. The early followers of Francis would be out on the road, giving or begging for alms, preaching by example or with words, working for their living, spending time in personal prayer, but Francis insisted that they gather for communal prayer daily. So when they asked him what prayers they should pray, he gave them the **Our Father**. Eventually they prayed **the Psalms in the Divine Office**. All of these were committed to memory since they owned no books. And of course, there was the **Eucharist**. Whenever they were near a church and a priest at the time of Mass, Francis had a keen sense of the power of prayer to bond the community.

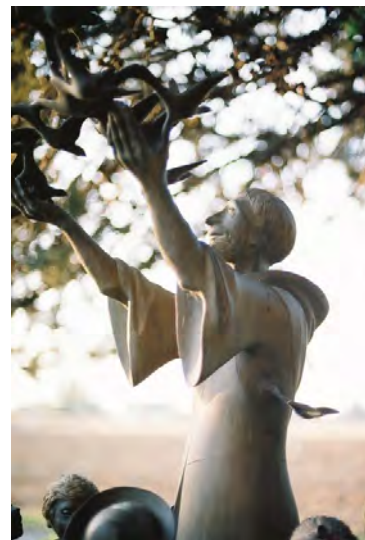


Photo by Sr. Marianne Saieg, OSF

This communal prayer had to be simple, understandable and accessible to all because his followers came from varied backgrounds. This is relevant today for those of us who participate in parish and small group prayer activities as well as when we pray in the solitude of our hearts.

The Incarnation as Center



Artwork by Sr. Kay Francis Berger, OSF

Another facet of Franciscan prayer, Foley says, is that it is *incarnational*. By this we mean that Francis' experience of Jesus took in the **whole life of Christ** from birth to passion to resurrection. Beyond that he adored the Christ of John's Gospel. "In the beginning the Word already existed; The Word was with God, and the Word was God....Through him God made all things; not one thing in all creation was made without him." So we have the stories of Francis constructing the stable in Grechio, receiving the wounds of Christ on Alverna, and singing his Canticle of the Creatures from his deathbed :

*With all creatures the brothers and sisters should praise
the Ruler of heaven and earth (Mt 11:25)
and give thanks because, by the holy will
and through the only Son with the Holy Spirit,
God created all things spiritual and material,
And created us in the divine image and likeness (RIII)*

Francis, Always the Troubadour

Another facet of the beautiful gem of Franciscan prayer is in its passion and lyricism. Its celebration through music, dance, poetry, and art overflows from the **passionate nature of Francis**. He never lost the creative spirit of his youthful troubadour days. Often he was outrageous in his expression of the extravagant love of God. On Christmas day he commanded his brothers to smear fat on the walls of the house because even the walls deserved to be fed and nourished on the great feast of the Incarnation. **All was holy!** As Franciscans, we revel in embodying our prayer in the beauty of all forms of art and music. At the core is always the celebration of Eucharist with reverence and wonder.

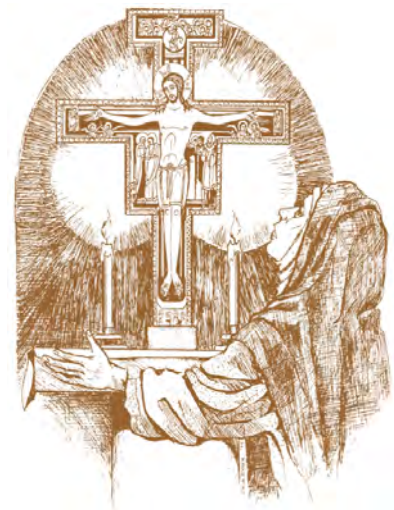


Artwork by Sr. Kay Francis Berger, OSF

*Let them participate in the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ
and receive his Body and Blood with great humility and reverence
remembering the words of the Lord,:*
“Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life” (Jn 6:54)
*Moreover, they are to show the greatest possible reverence and honor
for the most sacred name, written words
and most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ,
through whom all things in heaven and on earth
have been brought to peace and reconciliation
with Almighty God (Col 1:20) (RIII)*

Clare’s Vision

Clare, who called herself the “little plant” of Francis, lived many more years than Francis and enriched his legacy with her own unique gifts. Francis had advised his followers, “I have done what it was given me to do; now you go and do what you have been given.” Clare took him seriously, and was unconditionally open to the work of the Holy Spirit. One of her images of prayer was a mirror. When she looked into a mirror she saw the crucified Christ. In other words she measured herself against Christ. How much was she like him?



Artwork by Sr. Kay Francis Berger, OSF

How far short did she fall? Christ reflects back to us who we are to be. (Delio HFL 29) Clare teaches us to pray in a fourfold admonition:

Gaze upon the Lord....see with the heart.

Consider...meditate on him in the Scriptures, spiritual reading.

Contemplate...immerse yourself in the presence of the crucified One.

Imitate...listen and live out his life in the here and now of your own life.

Our Franciscan Legacy

As Franciscans, we walk together in this rich legacy of grace that the Holy Spirit offers us through the life of Francis and Clare and all the Franciscans who have followed them throughout the ages. We are people of the story, and our story comes from the way that we live the Scriptures. Francis was called to hear the Word of God and simply live it. When the Pope asked him to write a Rule for all the people who began to follow him, Francis only wanted to give the Holy Father the Gospels. That was all he needed. Clare went through the same experience. They both took Jesus at his word. Of course, this would be an enormous challenge to the church as it is today.



Photo by Sr. Marianne Saieg, OSF

Reflecting on the Prayer of Francis and Clare

How do private and community prayer weave through my life?

What are the most fruitful aspects of each for me?

Which aspects of Franciscan prayer resonate with my life?

How can I build on these insights?

Resources for Franciscan prayer:

Scripture: Mt 6:5; 7:7; 18;19

The Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis, Franciscan Federation, 1997

Delio, I., *Franciscan Prayer*, — An examination of Franciscan prayer through the twin lenses of St. Clare and St. Bonaventure. In the Introduction, the author states "...that an understanding of prayer in the Franciscan tradition...can offer a new vitality to Christian life today because it is a path of relationship with God that strives to live in the fullness of the Incarnation."

Other books:

Delio, I, *Clare of Assisi: A Heart Full of Love* and *The Humility of God*

Bodo, M., *A Retreat with Francis & Clare of Assisi: Following Our Pilgrim Hearts*

THE PLACE OF MARY IN FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY

Devotion and imitation of Mary, the Mother of God, has always been an integral part of Franciscan spirituality. Because the Incarnation was so core to Francis, his devotion to the Mother of Jesus followed. As Francis aspired to live in Christ, he also set as an ideal, to bear Christ as Mary did. *"[We are] mothers when we carry Him in our heart and body...and give Him birth through a holy activity."*

In her book, *Clare of Assisi, A Heart Full of Love*, Delio describes how Clare was transformed by this mystical experience. (pp, 76-78)

"We are not only to follow Christ but to give birth to Christ in our lives. Clare's spiritual path is a mystical one. It is a mysticism of motherhood because she not only seeks the hidden presence of God but asks that the love of God be brought to birth in our lives. She holds up Mary, the Mother of God as the model of this mystical path, indicating to Agnes that she should *'cling to His most sweet Mother who gave birth to a Son whom the heavens could not contain.'* Clare sees the potential of the human person as one of making God present in our lives. In her third letter [to Agnes] she states that the soul of a faithful person, like Mary, is greater than heaven itself, *'since the heavens and the rest of creation cannot contain their Creator and only the faithful soul is his dwelling place and throne.'* She emphasizes the capacity of the human soul to bear God....She [Clare] continues by saying:

As the glorious Virgin of virgins, carried [Him] materially, so you, too, by following in her footprints (cf. Pet 2:21), especially [those] of poverty and humility, can, without any doubt, always carry Him spiritually in your chaste and virginal body, holding Him by Whom you and all things are held together..(Wis 1:7)'"

Within the Joliet Franciscan Congregation, the feast of the Immaculate Conception on December 8 is a special community celebration. Having been founded in 1865 shortly after the doctrine was declared, the Sisters dedicated themselves to Mary under this title, as Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate. In photos of Sisters when they wore full habits, you will see long rosaries hanging from the cords that served as belts.



Artwork by Sr. Kay Francis Berger, OSF

The Franciscan Crown is a rosary of seven decades which became popular with Franciscans in the fifteenth century. In addition to the Joyful Mysteries, they added two more decades, the Resurrection and the Assumption and Coronation of Mary. At the end two more Hail Marys are added to become seventy two for the number of years Mary is believed to have lived on earth. Franciscans throughout the centuries have prayed this rosary and there are legends that have accompanied its use.

Reflecting on the Places of Mary

How has your devotion to Mary grown and shaped your life? How do you pray to Mary?

What titles, prayers or books about her have meaning for you?

How does the image Clare and Francis describe of birthing Christ to the world resonate with you?

PRAYERFUL COMPANIONING

The Associate Relationship usually begins with the Associate and her/his Companion in a time of mutual faith sharing and study. Gradually as the Associate participates in ongoing community workshops, retreats, and various large and small group events, the relationship grows and expands to include more Sisters and Associates.

*We commit ourselves to living with and for one another
in mutual affection and loyalty.*

*We reverence each one's dignity
and challenge one another
to ever greater personal holiness.*

*We treasure one another as we share
our possessions and talents,
our joys, our sorrows, our ideals —
our very selves.*

*We recognize that diversity among us
marks the action of the Spirit
and serves both to enrich us
and to expand our ministry to others.*

*Our bond of community is strengthened
through our prayer and worship together,
especially through the Eucharist,
the Sacrament of faith and love.*

Constitutions 9,10



Artwork by Sr. Kay Francis Berger, OSF

BUILDING COMMUNITY WITH CLARE

Motivated by her deep experience of God within her, Clare gathered the diverse group of women who followed her into a community of mutual charity. From Francis, she experienced the meaning of family love, that of brothers, sisters, spouses, mothers. This is the love they must have for each other. Of special significance for our postmodern world is her ideal of interdependence and mutuality. Rev. Joseph Chinnici, OFM, addressed this at the 1987 Annual Federation Council Conference:



“The point is simple; there is something that takes place among people that is at the heart of the evangelical experience of God; the vocation has as much to say about the relationships among men and women, clergy and laity, sisters and brothers, religious and seculars as about the ‘religious life’ considered in itself....This experience of the evangelical exchange goes way beyond working together, or sharing the apostolate of others, or associating with others

in prayer. It cuts much deeper and implies a material and spiritual interdependence where each allows the other to change himself or herself and gives to the others the recognition that the ‘spirit of the Lord’ is at work in their humanity also. In the evangelical experience, this is the primary mode in which Christ is made incarnate; it is a shared experience of the Spirit.”

Reflecting on Community

Consider the various communities to which you already belong such as family, work, church, and other groups with whom you share time and talent.

In which ones have you experienced a “material and spiritual interdependence where each allows the other to change himself or herself?”

How might you bring Franciscan values to these kinds of communities?

Consider how your commitment as an Associate will affect the communities with whom you are already committed.

Chapter 7: Charism of the Three Franciscan Orders and the Rule For Lay People

THE THREE FRANCISCAN ORDERS

Background

Early on, the Holy Spirit drew lay people to Francis. By his life, Francis preached a God of love, a God of limitless forgiveness, a God unconditionally in love with the world. This was good news for many in his time who lived under fear and trembling in their attempt to please a very judgmental God. The joy and peace that emanated from Francis and his followers was like a breath of fresh air, a breath of the Spirit, in the world of chaos and violence that permeated the 13th century. In addition to numerous wars among cities and countries, Francis lived in a time of brutal trial, punishment and execution of heretics. The Church was in sore need of reform.

The Founding and Rules of the Three Franciscan Orders

As more and more people flocked to him for guidance, Francis wanted to be sure that his followers did not digress from the teachings of the Church and that the Church would understand and approve the way of life that he was living and preaching. That Francis wrote a Rule at all is a testament to grace. Initially he resisted because he simply wanted to live the Gospel. That was Rule enough for him. When the Pope insisted that he write a Rule, he acquiesced because of his great love for and trust in the authority of Peter's successor. Since the Gospel was his way of life, his written Rule is grounded in Scripture passages.



Artwork by Associate Karen Kiezman

We have to remember that up until this time great monastic orders were established and exerted powerful influence on the culture and the Church. Their wealth and lands employed many classes of people, often in a kind of servitude and dependence. Monasteries often had strong political influence on the towns and villages around them as well as with the Church in Rome. Francis was proposing something new and radical for the times. His Friars Minor were not living in monasteries or owning property. They were walking the roads in imitation of Jesus, serving the poor, totally dependent on God. They lived as “minors” in the midst of formidable power and wealth.

The First Order – Friars Minor

The Friars Minor, both priests and brothers, belong to what is called The First Order. The Rule approved for them during the life of St. Francis, like all Rules, has gone through many changes and papal approvals over the centuries in response to the signs of the times. Yet its foundation is always the example of Francis and the Scriptures that guided him. In the same way, we read and pray Scripture to discern how we can live the Gospel *today*.

The Second Order — Cloistered Nuns

St. Clare and the women who followed her were later designated as belonging to The Second Order. Clare spent her entire life getting papal approval for her Rule for the Poor Ladies, as they were first called. Compared to Francis, her perseverance was even more heroic. At first, she only wanted to live the Gospel as Francis did, in the world, on the road. But this was an impossible goal for women at the time. The culture and the Church would not accept it. With loyalty and obedience to the Pope, she agreed to bring the women who followed her to the cloister at San Damiano, but only in strict poverty, in total dependence on God, owning nothing. In the decades after Francis died, Clare clung tenaciously to his original ideals, despite the Friars’ conflicts and adaptations of their Rule. It was only on her deathbed that the Pope relented and finally approved her Rule for the Second Order, the first rule ever written for women by a woman.

The Third Order – Lay People and Vowed Religious

Now we come to the Rule for lay people who wanted to follow Francis in the footsteps of Jesus but had commitments to families, and other responsibilities. Francis called them “The Brothers and Sisters in Penance” and they made up what later became the Third Order. For them Francis wrote the first Rule in 1221. This Rule was formally approved in 1289 by Pope Nicholas IV.

Over the centuries this Third Order came to include congregations of vowed men and women religious founded for the apostolic works of mercy. These non-cloistered religious belong to the Third Order Regular (TOR). Our Joliet Franciscan Sisters follow this Rule. The original Third Order lay people called to live the Franciscan charism in the world, belong to the Secular Franciscan Order (SFO). Each of these groups (TOR and SFO) has a distinct Rule of life that has evolved in accord with changing times and needs.

Understanding More About the Third Order Secular and the Relationship to the Associate Movement

Over the centuries many religious orders have had lay people associated with them in various forms of prayer and ministry. The “Associate Movement” as we know it today evolved after Vatican II. The Associate, in multiple ways, bonds with the chosen congregation in order to deepen his or her Franciscan way of living the Gospel. In our Congregation Associates renew their commitment yearly.

Some of our Joliet Franciscan Associates are SFO members. Some were members before they became Associates and some joined after they made their Associate commitment. In the first case, becoming an Associate and bonding with the Joliet Franciscans added another dimension to their lifelong promise to live as Francis did. Those who started as Associates and later went through the formation for Secular Franciscans, in the same way added another dimension to their quest of deepening their Franciscan spirituality. The Secular Franciscan joins a local fraternity of lay members. After a period of orientation and formation, they make a permanent commitment to live the Gospel in the world according to the example of Francis, following the SFO Rule. Members meet regularly for prayer and mutual support with spiritual guidance from a Franciscan Friar or designated Franciscan lay leader. Fraternities are organized into regional, national and international groups. The Secular Franciscans is the largest of the three Franciscan Orders.



Reflecting on the Three Franciscan Orders

How has what you've read here about the three Orders helped you better understand the beginnings of the Franciscans? What surprised you or was new information?

What might you have in common with the lay people who asked Francis how they could follow him and still fulfill their obligations as parents, teachers, workers, civil authorities?

How does the Secular Franciscan Order (SFO) differ from The Associate Movement? What is common and what is different?

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SFO RULE FOR ASSOCIATES

On the next pages you will find the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order. May your reading and praying of this Rule be ongoing and life giving. Be creative in your approach. Focus on an article that speaks to you and challenges you; let it permeate your day or a particular relationship. Be open to the work of discerning and carrying out the work you are constantly given to do in your time as Francis did in his time.



RULE FOR SECULAR FRANCISCANS

Chapter One: The Secular Franciscan Order

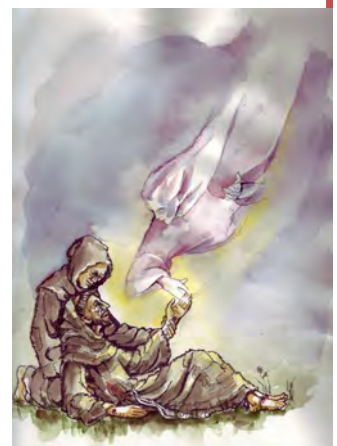


- Article 1: The Franciscan family, as one among many spiritual families raised up by the Holy Spirit in the Church, unites all members of the people of God—laity, religious, and priests—who recognized that they are called to follow Christ in the footsteps of Saint Francis of Assisi. In various ways and forms but in life-giving union with each other, they intend to make present the charism of their common Seraphic Father in the life and mission of the Church.
- Article 2: The Secular Franciscan Order holds a special place in this family circle. It is an organic union of all Catholic fraternities scattered throughout the world and open to every group of the faithful. In these fraternities the brothers and sisters, led by the Spirit, strive for perfect charity in their own secular state. By their profession they pledge themselves to live the gospel in the manner of Saint Francis by means of this rule approved by the Church.
- Article 3: The present rule, succeeding "*Memoriale Propositi*" (1221) and the rules approved by the Supreme Pontiffs Nicholas IV and Leo XIII, adapts the Secular Franciscan Order to the needs and expectations of the Holy Church in the conditions of changing times. Its interpretation belongs to the Holy See and its application will be made by the General Constitutions and particular statutes.

Chapter Two: The Way Of Life

- Article 4: The rule and life of the Secular Franciscans is this: *to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of St. Francis of Assisi who made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and people. Christ, the gift of the Father's love, is the way to him, the truth into which the Holy Spirit leads us, and the life which he has come to give abundantly.* Secular Franciscans should devote themselves especially to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to gospel.
- Article 5: Secular Franciscans, therefore, should seek to encounter the living and active person of Christ in their brothers and sisters, in Sacred Scripture, in the Church, and in liturgical activity. The faith of St. Francis, who often said, "I see nothing bodily of the Most High Son of God in this world except His most holy body and blood," should be the inspi-

- Article 6: They have been made living members of the Church by being buried and raised with Christ in baptism; they have been united more intimately with the Church by profession. Therefore, they should go forth as witnesses and instruments of her mission among all people, proclaiming Christ by their life and words. Called like Saint Francis to *rebuild the Church* and inspired by his example, let them devote themselves energetically to living in full communion with the pope, bishops, and priests, fostering an open and trusting dialog of apostolic effectiveness and creativity.
- Article 7: United by their vocation as "brothers and sisters of penance" and motivated by the dynamic power of the gospel, let them conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of that radical interior change which the gospel calls "conversion." Human frailty makes it necessary that this conversion be carried out daily. On this road to renewal the sacrament of reconciliation is the privileged sign of the Father's mercy and the source of grace.
- Article 8: As Jesus was the true worshipper of the Father, so let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do. Let them participate in the sacramental life of the Church, above all the Eucharist. Let them join in liturgical prayer in one of the forms proposed by the Church, reliving the mysteries of the life of Christ.
- Article 9: The Virgin Mary, humble servant of the Lord, was open to His every word and call. She was embraced by Francis with indescribable love and declared the protectress and advocate of his family. The Secular Franciscans should express their ardent love for her by imitating her complete self-giving and by praying earnestly and confidently.
- Article 10: United themselves to the redemptive obedience of Jesus, who placed His will into the Father's hands, let them faithfully fulfill the duties proper to their various circumstances of life. Let them also follow the poor and crucified Christ and witness to Him even in difficulties and persecutions.
- Article 11: Trusting the Father, Christ chose for Himself and His mother a poor and humble life, even though He valued created things attentively and lovingly. Let the Secular Franciscans seek a proper spirit of detachment from temporal goods by simplifying their own material needs. Let them be mindful that according to the gospel they are stewards of the goods received for the benefit of God's children.
- Thus, in the spirit of the Beatitudes,



Artwork: Sister Kay Frances Berger, OSF

and as pilgrims and strangers on their way to the home of the Father, they should strive to purify their hearts from every tendency and yearning for possession and power.

- Article 12: Witnessing to the good yet to come and obligated to acquire purity of heart because of the vocation they have embraced, they should set themselves free to love God and their brothers and sisters.
- Article 13: As the Father sees in every person the features of his Son, the firstborn of many brothers and sisters, so the Secular Franciscans, with a gentle and courteous spirit, accept all people as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ. A sense of community will make them joyful and ready to place themselves on an equal basis with all people, especially with the lowly for whom they shall strive to create conditions of life worthy of people redeemed by Christ.
- Article 14: Secular Franciscans, together with all people of good will, are called to build a more fraternal and evangelical world so that the kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively. Mindful that anyone "who follows Christ, the perfect person, becomes more of a person in his or her very self," let them exercise their responsibilities competently in the Christian spirit of service.
- Article 15: Let them individually and collectively be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives. Especially in the field of public life, they should make definite choices in harmony with their faith.
- Article 16: Let them esteem work both as a gift and as a sharing in the creation, redemption and service of the human community.
- Article 17: In their family they should cultivate the Franciscan spirit of peace, fidelity, and respect for life, striving to make of it a sign of a world already renewed in Christ. By living the grace of matrimony, husbands and wives in particular should bear witness in the world to the love of Christ for His Church. They should joyfully accompany their children on their human and spiritual journey by providing a simple and open Christian education and being attentive to the vocation of each child.
- Article 18: Moreover they should respect all creatures, animate and inanimate, which "bear the imprint of the Most High," and they should strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship.

Article 19: Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon. Messengers of perfect joy in every circumstance, they should strive to bring joy and hope to others. Since they are immersed in the resurrection of Christ, which gives true meaning to Sister Death, let them serenely tend toward the ultimate encounter with the Father.

*May whoever observes all this be filled in heaven
with the blessing of the most high Father,
and on earth with that of his beloved Son,
together with the Holy Spirit, the Comforter.”
—Blessing of St. Francis from the Testament*

Reflecting on Four Articles of the Secular Franciscan Order

Although Associates do not commit to living by the SFO Rule, their principles guide anyone committed to Franciscan values. Re-read in full each of the articles listed below in order to support your reflection. These brief reflections are just “teasers” to invite you to plumb the depths of each of the nineteen Articles. A year of prayer, meditation and action could be spent on any of them. They give us, as Franciscans, solid stepping stones for our journey.

Article 4. “Going from gospel to life and life to gospel”.

This is really the core of what Francis is trying to say to us lay Franciscans in the world. It sounds so simple and yet we are daily challenged by it. Francis urges us to *know* Christ and follow in his footsteps. Not to do everything that Christ did, but to live *his* truth, love and compassion in *our* lives, *our* circumstances, *our* joys and sorrows.

Perhaps you have a favorite verse of Scripture. Often it changes as your circumstances change. Or a verse you heard proclaimed at Mass or read in your daily practice has struck you with a challenge or has given you encouragement. These are signs that you are “...going from gospel to life and from life to gospel.”

What scripture passages do you find yourself returning to over and over?

Why are these so important to you?

How do different passages inspire you during different times in your life?

Article 11. "...in the spirit of the Beatitudes...they should strive to purify their hearts from every tendency and yearning for possession and power."

In this longer Article, the core and meaning of Franciscan poverty is laid out. Francis chose poverty because Christ chose it for himself and his mother. In the signs of his own times, Francis could see that unbridled greed led to unbridled power over others. In our own fast-paced world we are pulled in many directions and enticed to acquire more and more.

How can we cultivate a spirit of detachment and simplify our material needs?

What does being a good steward of God's gifts mean to you?

As a citizen of the richest country in the world, how do you see the connection between Franciscan poverty and power?

What effect might Franciscan poverty have on world peace?

Article 13. "...with a gentle and courteous spirit accept all people as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ..."

We could contemplate each phrase here: "gentle and courteous...accept all people...people as gift...people as image of Christ." We are challenged here to place ourselves on an equal basis with all, especially the lowly, with whom we strive to create conditions of life worthy of God's children.

How often in our daily comings and goings do we fall short in the way we relate to those around us?

When and how do you move beyond your comfort zone to be a co-creator with God to build a better world?

What kinds of communities support you in this work?

How do you build a community that is joyful and ready to act for justice?

Article 18 "...respect all creatures, animate and inanimate..."

Much can be written about Francis' love for all creation. In contrast to the word "nature," the very word "creation" acknowledges a Creator. It is this Creator God that Francis falls in love with. This love flows out of Francis onto all of creation just as God's love flows into Francis through creation. Franciscans call this experience one of universal *kinship*. We are all "kin," brothers and sisters to each other.

For example, spend some time imagining how water is our “Sister”. *Why do we need it? How do we obtain it? How do we treat it? How do we waste it? How is it exploited and polluted throughout the world? What about its needs and use by our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world? If Francis would pickup a worm from the path and place it safely in the grass, what would he be doing about the gold mining process in many parts of the world which is killing the sources of water for millions?*

What are some environmental issues that challenge you to study and act? How can you share your growing awareness with family, friends, colleagues and your church group?



Chapter 8: Resources

SELECTED FRANCISCAN PRAYERS

Canticle of Brother Sun

Most high, omnipotent, good Lord
To you alone belongs praise and glory, honor and blessing.
No one is worthy to breathe your name.

Be praised, my Lord, for all your creatures.
In the first place for the blessed Brother Sun who gives us
the day
And enlightens us through You.
He is beautiful and radiant in his great splendor
Giving witness to You, most omnipotent One.

Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Moon and the stars
Formed by You so bright, precious, and beautiful.

Be praised, my Lord, for Brother Wind
And the airy skies so cloudy and serene.
For every weather, be praised because it is life giving.

Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Water,
So necessary yet humble, precious and chaste.

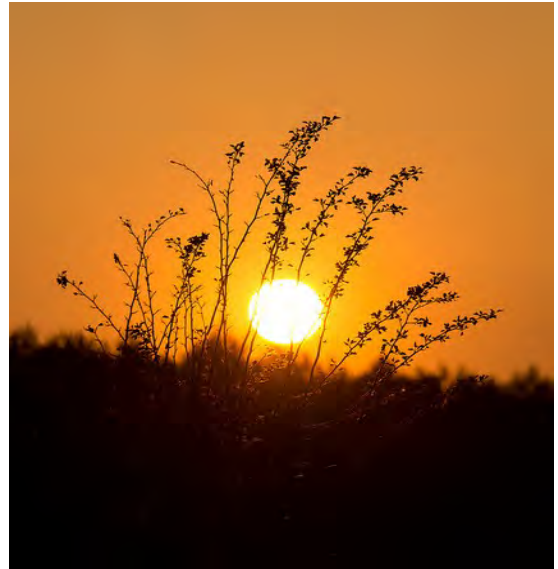
Be praised, my Lord, for Brother Fire who lights up the night.
He is beautiful and carefree, robust and fierce.

Be praised, my Lord, for our sister, Mother Earth,
Who nourishes and watches over us while bringing forth
Abundant fruits and colored flowers and herbs.

Be praised, my Lord, for those who pardon through Your love
And bear witness and trial.
Blessed are those who endure in peace
For they will be crowned by you, Most High.

Be praised, my Lord, for our sister, bodily death whom no living being can escape.
Woe to those who die in sin.
Blessed are those who discover Your holy will.
The second death will do them no harm.

Praise and bless the Lord. Give thanks and serve God with great humility.



*Adapted from a free translation by Cunningham, L.S. Francis
of Assisi, Performing the Gospel Life.*

Corporate Prayer

For Nuclear Disarmament

You have given us life, intelligence and the beauty of Creation, O Lord. Your good gifts were given so we might be stewards of all that is alive. In your mercy, help us turn from destruction, from the bombs and barricades. Lead us to life again, to affirmation of all goodness and to international disarmament. With your grace, may we begin to dismantle the bombs, beat the swords into plowshares and so transform the nuclear nightmare into the peace you have proposed. Hear our prayer, Lord, and guide us in your ways. Amen

From prayer by: *Education for Justice*

For a Reverent, Interdependent Relationship with Earth and all its People.

Creator of worlds beyond our knowing,
This earth is known to us
And often feels like ours.
Yet where we walk and work
And love and laugh
And rest and play
And swim and build
And tend and teach
And sleep and eat
... and live...
Is only for our use, today.
May we walk as stewards...
Lightly, mindfully, and gratefully-
Amen.

For an End to Human Trafficking

Good and Provident God, you are the compassionate and loving Creator of all. With trust we claim your justice, mercy, compassion, and comfort for the millions affected by human trafficking in our world today. God of all goodness, give freedom to those who are bound by the chains of modern-day slavery. Comfort those who are trapped and exploited; heal their hurts; give them courage and hope. Awaken in the hearts of those who are buying, selling, and holding other human beings enslaved, a sense of righteousness and justice. Unsettle those whose apathy slows human trafficking to go unchallenged. Give wisdom and insight to all lawmakers. Give valor and integrity to those who enforce the laws. Holy Spirit, show each of us how to live as a hope-filled presence in our world until all God's children are set free. Amen.



All Saints of the Franciscan Order

LITANY OF THE SAINTS AND BLESSED OF THE FRANCISCAN FAMILY

Lord have mercy.
 Christ have mercy.
 Lord have mercy.
 Holy Mary, Queen of the Seraphic Order... Pray for us.
 Holy Father, Pope Francis,
 St. Bernard and companions, you first martyrs of the Franciscan Order,
 St. Daniel and companions, you martyrs in Africa,
 St. Peter Baptist and companions, called through the cross to life in Nagasaki (six Friar Minors, 17 of the Secular Franciscan Order),
 St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen, martyr, tireless in the spreading of the faith,
 Blessed Apollinaris and companions, martyrs in Japan (18 Friar Minors, 27 of the Secular Franciscan Order),
 Blessed Apollinaris of Fribourg (Switzerland), martyr of the French Revolution,
 Blessed Engelbert Kolland who called his murderer "friend,"
 St. Maximilian Kolbe who gave his life for his brother in Christ,
 Saint (Padre) Pio of Pietrelcina marked with the stigmata of Jesus,
 All the Saints and Blessed of the Franciscan Family... pray for us,
 St. Anthony of Padua, powerful teacher of the Gospel life,
 St. Ferdinand, king of Castile,
 St. Louis, strong in faith,
 St. Bonaventure, teacher of the Seraphic Order,
 St. Roch, helper in times of the plague,
 St. Bernardine of Siena, great preacher, unifier of east and west,
 St. John of Capistrano, peacemaker and apostle of charity,
 St. Lawrence of Brindisi, full of the Spirit of counsel and fortitude,
 St. Vincent Palotti, pillar of the Church in troubled times,
 St. John Mary Vianney, inspired by the Good Shepherd,
 St. Joseph Cafasso, man of limitless patience,
 St. Conrad of Parzham, mediator of divine mercy,
 St. Pius X, full of apostolic zeal to renew everything in Christ,
 Blessed John XXIII, humble and beloved pope,
 Blessed Luchesius, first confessor of the Secular Franciscan Order,
 Blessed Giles of Assisi, 3rd companion of St. Francis,
 Blessed Contardo Ferrini, lay helper in a student community,
 Blessed Joseph Freinademetz, example of missionary poverty in China,
 All you holy and blessed confessors of the Franciscan Family.... Pray for us.
 St. Clare (Chiara, Clara), mother of the Poor Ladies of St. Damiano,
 St. Elizabeth of Hungary, mother of the poor and joyful in persecution,
 St. Rose of Viterbo, model of perfection at the age of 18 years,
 St. Agnes of Assisi, filled with the Seraphic Spirit,
 St. Margaret of Cortona, great penitent,
 St. Elizabeth of Portugal, exemplary mother and promoter of

peace,
 St. Bridget of Sweden, gifted with extraordinary love for the Crucified (3rd Order, foundress of the
 Bridgetines),
 St. Colette, great reformer with the Spirit of prayer,
 St. Angela Merici , caring and wise educator of the youths (3rd Order, foundress of the
 Ursulines),
 St. Veronica Giuliani, perfected by suffering and renunciation,
 St. Mary Frances of the Five Wounds,
 St. Mary Magdalene Postel, lover of children,
 Blessed Agnes of Prague, who spent her life caring for the homeless,
 Blessed Angela of Foligno, rich in contemplation,
 Blessed Crescentia, miraculously joyful in suffering,
 Blessed Francisca Schervier, mother of the poor,
 Blessed Josepha Rosello, full of love and care for the sick,
 Blessed Maria Assunta Pallotta, missionary in China,
 All you blessed and holy women of the Franciscan Family..... Pray for us.
*All you blessed women who have gone before us as Sisters and Associates of St. Francis of Mary
 Immaculate... Pray for us.*
 Praise the Lord all you His saints and all who fear Him, small and great.
 Let us rejoice and sing and give honor to the Lord our God.
 Let us pray:

Almighty eternal God, we remember all the Brothers and Sister of the Franciscan family
 whose life is perfected in You. We beg You because of so many people who pray for us.
 Give us, too, the promised land after this our sojourn in a foreign land as You have
 promised to those who love You. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

(Prayer and picture from website of Five Franciscan Martyrs' Region—Secular Franciscan Order)

FRANCISCAN PLACES TO KNOW

Assisi

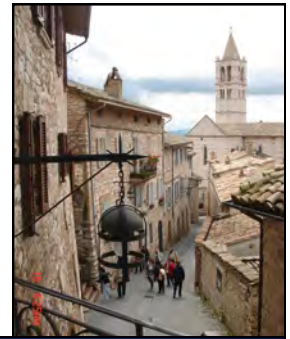
This little medieval town in the Umbrian region of Italy sits on the west side of Mt.

Subasio and was the home of St. Francis and St. Clare.



Basilica of St. Francis

Francis' body and the story of Francis' life through Frescoes and relics are found here. The first cornerstone was laid by Pope Gregory soon after Francis' death and canonization.



San Rufino

Bishop Rufino for whom the Cathedral is named is credited with the conversion of Assisi to Christianity in the third Century. Both Clare and Francis were baptized here. Clare lived right off the square in front of the San Rufino Cathedral. Assisi.



Portiuncula

The Basilica of Our Lady of the Angels replaced the small St. Mary of the Angels, the Portiuncula, located in the valley below Assisi. The church was given to Francis by the Benedictines at the beginning of the Order of Lesser Ones. It was here that Francis accepted Clare as his follower. It was here that the Chapter of Mats was held. It was here that Francis died in 1226. This Basilica was begun in 1569.



Basilica of St. Clare

At the present time the original San Damiano Cross is hanging here. This Basilica of St. Clare was built on the site of the Church of St. George, the first burial place of St. Francis and the site of his canonization just 2 years after his death.



Source of pictures
unknown

Rome: St. John Lateran

Francis traveled here in 1209 to request approval of his new way of life from Pope Innocent III. The statue of St. Francis as Patron of Italy commissioned by Mussolini is across the street.



San Damiano

Francis heard a voice from the cross: "Francis, go repair my house, which, as you can see, is falling into ruin." It is here that Francis began to repair the church literally. It became the home for St. Clare.



Rivotorto

The early beginnings of the small community of followers of Francis came here from Rome

when the rule was approved. These stone buildings are located within the present church dedicated to Our Lady of Consolation.

La Verna

Sanctuary in the Tuscan territory where Francis visited often. He received the Stigmata on his last visit in 1224 and composed the praises of God here in the same year.



The Carceri

Located right outside the walls of Assisi on Mount Subasio. Francis spent much time here in prayer in solitude, time critical to his conversion.



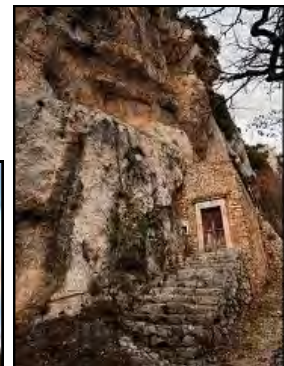
Rieti Valley: Francis' Four Sanctuaries

Fonte Columbo This is the sanctuary where Francis put together the final version of the Rule for his brothers. This is thought to be where he received his eye cauterization 1226 as well.



Puggio Bustone One of the most impressive of Franciscan places; it is high, rugged and remote. It is here that Francis greeted the people with "Good Morning, Good People." He found solitude, direction and inspiration for the Order here.

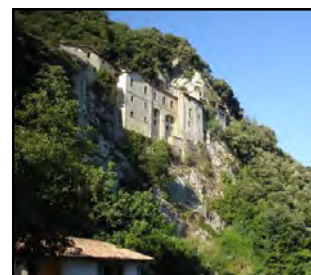
La Foresta Francis was sent here to heal after the stigmata when his eyes



were also worsening. Many people came to see Francis here. There is said to have been a miracle of the grapes here.



Greccio Another mountain retreat where Francis sought solitude. It is here that Francis popularized displaying the Christmas creche in 1223. Francis used very concrete means to awaken faith in the lives of the people.



CELEBRATED FEASTS

- April 16:** **The Feast of the Profession of St. Francis** - 1209 - Innocent III accepted the first rule and the Order received its canonical status. On this day we as Franciscans renew our commitments.
- August 2:** **The Feast of Our Lady of the Angels of the Portiuncula** - is remembered because the chapel of Our Lady of Angels near Assisi was important to Francis. Here the order had its beginning, Clare was received and Francis died. It is also considered the founding birthday of our Congregation and the founding of Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home (OLA) in Joliet.
- August 11:** **The Feast of St. Clare** - For many years this feast day of St. Clare was the day for postulants to be received and habits to be given to novices.
- September 17:** **The Feast of the Stigmata of St. Francis** - commemorates Francis' reception of the wounds of Jesus in his own body in 1224. Francis had a burning love for the Crucified.
- October 3:** **The Transitus of St. Francis** - remembers the death of our Father Francis, his moving or transitioning from this life to the next. The story of his life and death is a rich look at the journey of a man to "love with his whole being, to love God, the poor Christ, Lady Poverty, his brothers and sisters and all creation."
- October 4:** **The Feast of St. Francis** - is one of our two key community celebrations as Congregation along with December 8. We celebrate the joy and peace given by Francis.
- November 17:** **The Feast of St. Elizabeth of Hungary** - is remembered in a simple way. She is considered the founder of the third order Regular. Tradition connects this day with the giving of apples as St. Elizabeth did for the poor in her time.
- November 24:** **All Souls of the Seraphic Order** - A day of gratitude to remember those Franciscans who have gone before and on whose shoulders we humbly stand.
- November 29:** **All Saints of the Franciscan Order** - On this day we remember the rich heritage that is ours as Followers of Francis and Clare through the lives of the saints throughout the centuries. Included is a litany of the Franciscan Saints.
- December 8:** **Feast of the Immaculate Conception** - As our second key community celebration, this day commemorates and renews our dedication to Mary Immaculate, bearer of the Word Incarnate.

SIGNS AND SYMBOLS

Tau Cross



The Tau is a letter of the Hebrew and Greek alphabet. The origin of its use as a sign is found in Ezekiel.

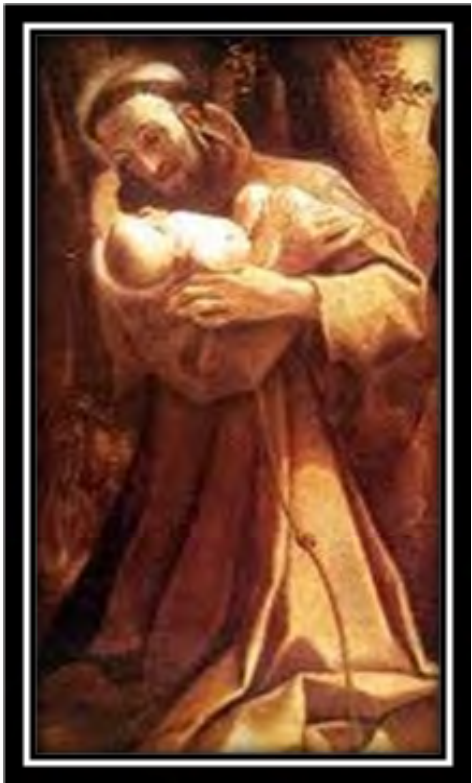
In 1215, at the Fourth Lateran Council, Pope Innocent III made reference to the sign of the Tau. He recalled Ezekiel 9:4, where the prophet envisions a linen-clad man who went throughout Jerusalem, marking the foreheads of those who lamented the sins of their city. The Pope set forth the Tau as the sign of penance and renewal in Christ. The Pope's speech had a profound impact on St. Francis. Francis embraced the sign of the Tau as an expression of Christ's cross. The Tau represented the depths of God's love for us in Christ crucified. The Tau became a treasured symbol for Francis.

Bonaventure wrote in *The Minor Legend of Saint Francis* that Francis venerated the Tau symbol with great affection. "He often spoke of it with eloquence and used it at the beginning of any action." He signed it with his own hand in letters he sent. "It was as if his whole desire were, according to the prophetic text (Ezekiel 9:4), to mark with a Tau the foreheads of those moaning and grieving, of those truly converted to Jesus Christ."

Thomas of Celano noted that "Francis favored the sign of the Tau over all others. With it alone he signed letters he sent and painted it on the walls" of all the places in which he stayed.

(Information from this article comes from *Francis of Assisi, Early Documents, Volume 2*.)





Source of picture unknown

The Crèche

Francis was always looking for new ways to make God's truths easily understandable to others. At Christmas 1223, while visiting the town of Greccio, Italy, he had the idea of showing people what Jesus' birthplace must have been like. He found a mountain cave near the village and fashioned it into a rough stable. St. Bonaventure (d. 1274), in his *Life of St. Francis of Assisi*, gave this account of what followed. "Then he prepared a manger and brought hay and an ox and an ass to the place appointed. The brethren were summoned, the people ran together, the forest resounded with their voices, and that venerable night was made glorious by many brilliant lights and sonorous psalms of praise. The man of God (St. Francis) stood before the manger, full of devotion and piety, bathed in tears and radiant with joy. Then he preached to the people around

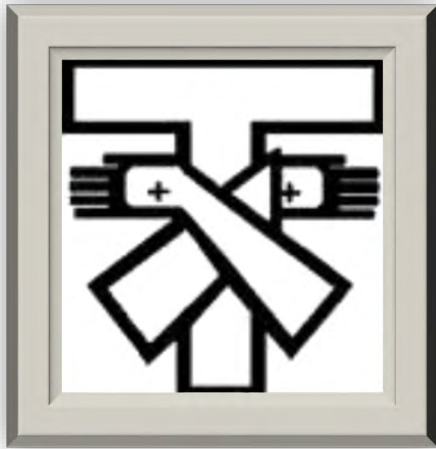
the Nativity of the poor King; and being unable to utter His name for the tenderness of His love, he called Him the Babe of Bethlehem.

Saint Francis is also considered the "father of the Christmas carol" for having been the first to include carols in Christmas worship services. As a boy, Francis had perhaps learned more in the school of the troubadours—itinerant composers and performers of songs—than from the priest of St. George's of Assisi, where his father had sent him for an education. That joy was contagious, and still is.



Source of picture unknown

Franciscan Coat of Arms



The Franciscan symbol of the “crossed arms” is the most familiar to us. It depicts the arms of JESUS and Francis crossed over the TAU, both bearing the imprint of the Crucifixion nails. Francis’ arm is enclosed in the sleeve of his habit. It is a celebration of that remarkable gift of grace which St. Francis received on Mt. Alverna, September 17th - the Stigmata... the bearing in his own body the marks of his crucified Lord.

Just before he died on October 3, Francis stretched out his arms over his brothers in the form of a CROSS and blessed them in the power and in the name of their crucified Lord. Then he told them, “I have done what was mine to do; may Christ teach you what is yours.

So we consider this symbol of our Franciscan life a true expression of the life of St. Francis, as well as a reminder to us of our own Christian call and sincerity of response. It is symbolic of the challenge and the mark we have accepted - to transform our lives, and become faithful followers of Christ, by living the gospel life, in the spirit of our Seraphic Father Francis of Assisi.

San Damiano Cross

The San Damiano Cross is the one St. Francis was praying before when he received the commission from the Lord to rebuild the Church. He was called to serve the Church in need of “repair.” He responded saying,

Great and glorious God, enlighten the darkness of my heart

and give me genuine faith, firm hope and perfect love.

Grant to me, O Lord, true perception and understanding

so that I may fulfill your Holy Will



The original cross presently hangs in Santa Chiara (St. Clare) Church in Assisi, Italy. All Franciscans cherish this cross as the symbol of their mission from God. The cross is called an icon cross because it contains images of people who have a part in the meaning of the cross. The tradition of such crosses began in the eastern Church and was transported by Serbian monks to the Umbrian district of Italy.

The San Damiano Cross was one of a number of crosses painted with similar figures during the 12th century in Umbria. The name of the painter is unknown.

The smaller symbols found on the San Damiano Cross are described on the next two pages.

Brief Explanation by: Fr. Michael Scanlon, T.O.R.
Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Province, USA

The History of the San Damiano Crucifix

An unknown Umbrian artist painted the Crucifix Icon in the 12th Century. There is strong Syrian influence, and history tells us that there had been some Syrian monks in the area. It is painted on wood (walnut) to which cloth had been glued. It is about 190 cm. high, 120 cms. wide and 12 cms. thick. Most likely it was painted for San Damiano to hang over the Altar, as the Blessed Sacrament was not reserved in non-parish churches of those times and especially those that had been abandoned and neglected as we know San Damiano had been. In 1257 the Poor Clares left San Damiano for San Giorgio and took the Crucifix with them. They carefully kept the Cross for 700 years.

In Holy Week of 1957, it was placed on public view for the first time, over the new Altar in San Giorgio's Chapel in the Basilica of St Clare of Assisi.

The Icon of the Transfigured Christ

For Eastern Christians the Icon is a representation of the living God; and by coming into its presence it becomes a personal encounter with the sacred, through the grace of the Holy Spirit. The San Damiano Icon is, then, a personal encounter with the transfigured Christ - God made man. The Crucifix contains the story of the death, resurrection and ascension into glory. It expresses the total and universal Paschal Mystery of Christ. It invites us all to take part in it with a lively and lived faith, just as St Francis did. Christ's saving death is shown in John's Gospel in its serene majesty, and the Crucifix portrays this in picture form. It is not surprising that Saint Francis was attracted to this Icon and that the inspiration for his life came from this Christ who spoke to him "Go repair my Church "

The Figure of the Christ

The central figure of the icon is Christ, not only because of the relative size, but because Christ is a figure of light dominating the scene and giving light to the other figures **"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."** (John 8:12). Christ stands upright, not nailed. The eyes of Jesus are open: He looks out to the world, which He has saved. He is alive, the one who is eternal. Jesus' vestment is a simple loin cloth - a symbol of both High Priest and Victim. The chest, throat and neck are very strong, Jesus gives power of re-creation to His Disciples (John 22:23). He breathed on His Disciples (John 20:22), the Greek word used recalls the moment of Creation (Gen 2:7). The shadow over the face of Jesus is increased by the fact the halo and face are tilted forward on the original Icon. The humanity of Christ veils the true glory of the Word who lives in the super luminous darkness of the Godhead. Behind the outstretched arms of Christ is His empty tomb, shown as a black rectangle.

The Medallion and Inscription



The Ascension is portrayed within this circle of red: Christ is breaking out of the circle, holding a golden cross which is now His Royal Scepter. His garments are gold - a symbol of royalty and victory. His red scarf is a sign of His Dominion and Kingship, exercised in love. Angels welcome Him into Heaven. IHS are the first three letters of the name of Jesus. The little bracket above indicates it is shorthand. NAZARE is the Nazarene; REX is 'king' and IUDEORUM is 'of the Jews', which is reported in St John's Gospel "**Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews**"

The Hand of the Father

From within the semi-circle at the very top of the Icon, He whom no eye has seen reveals Himself in a benediction. This blessing is given by the right hand of God with the finger extended - the Holy Spirit. The Father gives the gift of the Holy Spirit to all because of the merits of the Christ's Pas



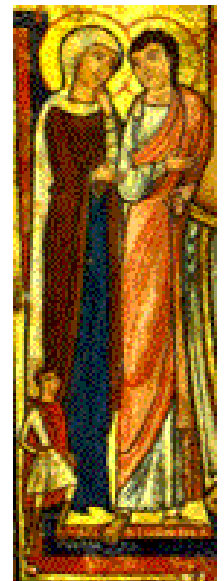
The Mystical Vine

Around the Cross are various calligraphic scrolls which may signify the mystical vine "I am the vine, you are the branches..." (John 15), which also contain the words "**Greater love has no one than this that one lays down one's life for one's friends.**" At the base of the cross there seems to be a section that looks like a rock - the symbol of the Church. The seashells are symbols of eternity - a mystery hidden in the vast and timeless sea of eternity is revealed.

Mary and John

As in John's Gospel, Mary and John are placed side by side. Mary's mantle is white meaning victory (Rev 3:5), purification (Rev 7:14); and good deeds (Rev 19:8). The gems on the mantle refer to the graces of the Holy Spirit.

The dark red worn under the mantle indicate intense love, while the inner dress is purple - the Ark of the Covenant (Ex 26: 1-4). Mary's left hand is raised to her cheek - her acceptance and love of John, and her right hand points to John while her eyes proclaim acceptance of Christ's words "**Woman, behold your son...**" (John 19:26). The blood drips onto John at this moment. John's mantle is rose color indicating eternal wisdom, while his tunic is white - purity. His position is between Jesus and Mary as is fitting for the disciple loved by both of them. He looks at Mary "**Son, behold your Mother**", but points to Christ.



Numbers

There are 33 figures in the Icon - Two Christ figures, 1 Hand of the Father, 5 major figures, 2 smaller figures, 14 angels, 2 unknown at His hands, 1 small boy, 6 unknown at the bottom of the Cross and one rooster. There are 33 nail heads along the frame just inside the shells and seven around the halo.

The Other Major Figures:

Mary Magdalene

Mary Magdalene is next to Christ making her very special; her hand is on her chin indicating a confided secret "He is risen." She wears scarlet, which is a symbol of love; her mantle of blue deepens



Mary Clopas

Some authorities make her the mother of James. She wears garments of an earthen color, a symbol of humility, and her light green mantle - hope. Her admiration of Jesus is indicated by the gesture of her hand.

The Centurion of Capernaum

He holds a piece of wood in his left hand, indicating his building of the Synagogue (Luke 7: 1 - 10). The little boy beyond his shoulder is his son healed by Jesus. The three heads behind the boy show **"he and his whole household believed"** (John 4: 45 - 54). He has extended his thumb and two fingers, a symbol of the Trinity, while his two closed fingers symbolize the hidden mystery of the two natures of Jesus the Christ. **"Truly He is the Son of God"** (Mark 15:39).

The Lesser Figures:

Longinus

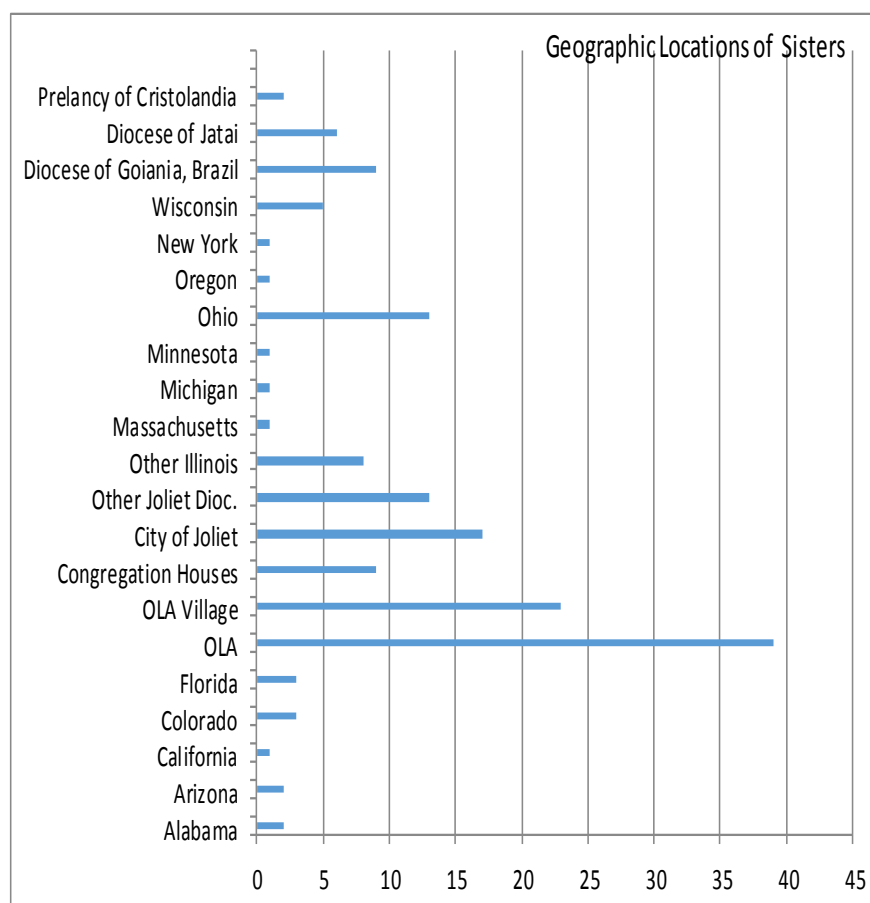
The Roman soldier who pierced Jesus' side with a lance.

Stephen

Tradition gives this name to the soldier who offered Jesus a sponge soaked in vinegar wine after Jesus cried out "I thirst" (John 19: 28 -30).

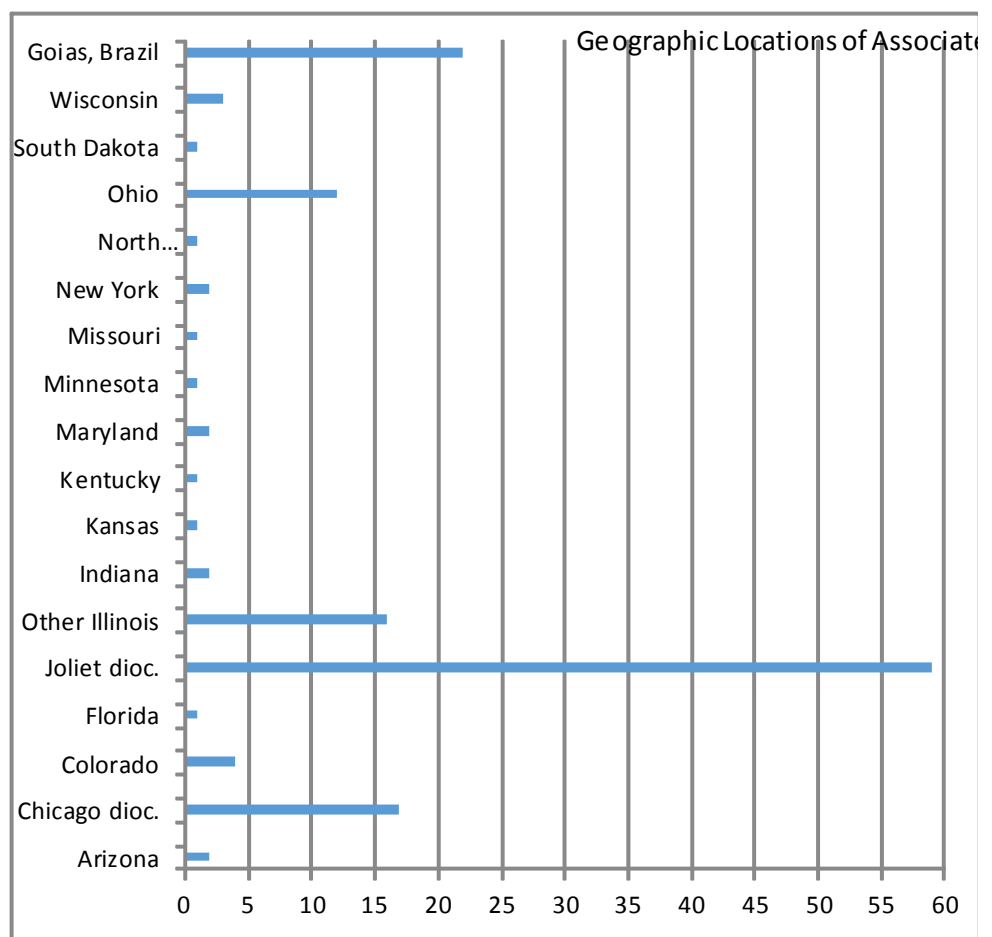
GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION OF SISTERS 2015

Alabama	2
Arizona	2
California	1
Colorado	3
Florida	3
OLA	39
OLA Village	23
Congregational Houses	9
City of Joliet	17
Other Joliet diocese	13
Other Illinois	8
Massachusetts	1
Michigan	1
Minnesota	1
Ohio	13
Oregon	1
New York	1
Wisconsin	5
Dioc. Goiania, Brazil	9
Dioc. Jatai, Brazil	2
Prelancy of Cristolandia	2



GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION OF ASSOCIATES, 2015

Arizona	2
Chicago dioc.	17
Colorado	4
Florida	1
Joliet dioc.	59
Other Illinois	16
Kansas	1
Kentucky	1
Indiana	2
Maryland	2
Minnesota	1
Missouri	1
New York	2
No. Carolina	1
Ohio	12
So. Dakota	1
Wisconsin	3
Goiias, Brazil	22



THEMATIC RESOURCES

<u>Design for Life</u>	<u>Rule of Francis</u> <u>Articles:</u>	<u>Writings of Francis</u> <u>(Admonitions)</u>	<u>Scripture</u>
Nature and Goal	1, 2, 3, 29	XXVII	Mt. 16:24; 25:34
Community	20, 21	XXV	Jn. 15:12; 8:18 Mt. 18:35; 5:24
Celibate Chastity	1, 7, 8, 9, 26	XV, XVI	Jn. 14:23; Lk. 18:1 Mt. 22:30; Mk. 12:30
Poverty	18, 19, 1, 28, 15, 16, 17	XIV	2Cor. 8:9; Jn. 2:5 1Tim 6:8; Phil. 2:5 Mt. 10:27-29
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